



# X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

**F\*\*\* TALKS TO TROOP LEADER BRYAN SINGER, BIG BADDIE OSCAR ISSAC & MEAN BALDIE JAMES MCAVOY**

**X-TRA ORDINARY MEN** 12 NOT-SO-AVERAGE JOES **THE MAN WHO KNEW INFINITY** DEV PATEL COUNTS HIMSELF LUCKY

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS** ERIC BANA SMOOTH TALKS **GAMES OF THRONES** ISSAC HEMPSTEAD WRIGHT GROWS UP

**SUPERGIRL** MELISSA BENOIST SOARS **AND MORE...**

EXCLUSIVE **LIGHTS OUT** + **MARVEL'S DOCTOR STRANGE** GIANT POSTERS INSIDE!

**JUNE 2016 • ISSUE 76**



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While I was thinking of what to write for this month's note, a song by Barbara Streisand somehow started playing in my head... Yes, that head of mine does amaze me sometimes.

*People,  
People who need people,  
Are the luckiest people in the world  
We're children, needing other children  
And yet letting a grown-up pride  
Hide all the need inside  
Acting more like children than children*

The above is an intro to the song "People", composed by Jule Styne with lyrics by Bob Merrill, for the 1964 Broadway musical *Funny Girl* starring Barbra Streisand. The musical was later adapted into a movie in 1968, which Streisand again starred in – she even won the Academy Award for Best Actress for it.

Of course I wasn't born then but it was stored somewhere at the back of my head from the numerous airplays it received on the radio in the years that followed. I'm not lyrically-inclined and remember tunes more than lyrics. It's only in times of extreme sadness (cue: break-ups) or, maybe, utter boredom (okay, trying to sound tough: melancholy is more like the word) that I pay attention to lyrics of every sentimental song that's playing on the radio.

My point is: the above lyrics suddenly started to make sense to me after all these years! You may call me slow, or it could just be due to old age... Or, is it the dawn of the digital age?

We have to admit that technological advancements has come to a stage where we are interacting more through devices rather than face-to-face. And it can really get depressing without you realising it, till BOOM! you're all alone on a Saturday night and you've re-watched *Titanic* for the 27<sup>th</sup> time till you know which split second that spit is going to come out of Leo's pretty mouth...

But you're still too full of pride to ask that bunch of bros you used to hang out with if they want to hang out again. You've scrolled through all your social apps trolling and being jealous of people who are posting having-a-great-time pics... But at the same time, you're telling yourself you're feeling lazy, and not in the mood to socialise. Such irony, eh?

But then, when you're finally out with at least another human being, you feel great, and remind yourself that you have to do this more often, while posting *that* having-a-great-time pic! Has this ever happened to you? I'm certainly guilty!

So, go and make the first move! Organise a film outing, or a dinner gathering with whoever you want to spend time with...make sure they're humans, though. Take what is inside this mag as a guide: of the movies to watch, or topics to talk about over dinner. People *do* need people, and spiteful wiefies.

See you at the movies!



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# S&M

STARS & MADHATTERS

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Plus First Look at:

**FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM** POWER RANGERS **DOCTOR STRANGE** And More...

## WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

Donnie Yen takes on a bunch of Stormtroopers in the first look at Rogue One: A Star Wars Story



## Starman returns to earth in remake

Sony is developing a remake of the 1984 science fiction drama *Starman*, with Shawn Levy (*Night at the Museum*, *Real Steel*) attached to direct. The John Carpenter-directed film starred Jeff Bridges as an extra-terrestrial who comes to earth after heeding the message of the Voyager satellite probe, embarking on a relationship with a recently widowed woman played by Karen Allen. Bridges was nominated for a Best Actor Oscar for playing *Starman*. Michael Douglas, one of the producers of the original, is returning to co-produce the remake. Screenwriter Arash Amel, who penned *Grace of Monaco* and the upcoming sci-fi drama *Titans*, is on board to write the remake.



## Blade Runner 2 targets Robin Wright, Dave Bautista and Ana de Armas

Robin Wright, Dave Bautista and Ana de Armas will join Harrison Ford and Ryan Gosling in *Blade Runner 2*, the sequel to Ridley Scott's massively influential 1982 science fiction film. The exact nature of their roles has yet to be revealed. The film is being helmed by Denis Villeneuve (*Prisoners*, *Sicario*), with acclaimed cinematographer Roger Deakins re-teaming with Villeneuve. The original film, based on the 1968 Philip K. Dick story *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, starred Ford as a bounty hunter pursuing androids known as 'replicants' who had returned to Earth illegally in order to artificially extend their four-year life spans. Alcon, the studio producing the sequel, was reportedly after Wright for some time but was hitherto unable to secure the actress due to her schedule for *House of Cards*. De Armas (*Knock Knock*) will next appear in sports biopic *Hands of Stone* alongside Édgar Ramírez and Robert De Niro. Dangerous days will dawn again when *Blade Runner 2* releases in October 2017.




## Snow White's sister Rose Red gets her own live-action Disney movie

Disney has been adapting its classic animated films into live-action ones, with *Beauty and the Beast* and a *Cruella de Vil* movie starring Emma Stone set to follow the likes of *Maleficent*, *Cinderella* and *The Jungle Book*. Disney is adding *Rose Red* to the slate, a film which will tell the story of Snow White's sister. The screenplay by Justin Merz (*The Boxcar Children*) has been around for some time, but Disney picked it up after Evan Daugherty (*Snow White and the Huntsman*) reworked the pitch. The character of *Rose Red* originally appeared in *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, but has no relation to the better-known *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*. Somewhat confusingly, *Rose-Red* and *Snow-White* are sisters in the story, but this is a completely distinct character from the 'Snow White' most of us know, though it appears both *Snow Whites* will be amalgamated in this new Disney version.



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SCREENPLAY BY CHAD HAYES & CAREY W. HAYES & JAMES WAN AND DAVID LESLIE JOHNSON PRODUCED BY PETER SAFRAN, p.g.a. ROB COWAN, p.g.a. JAMES WAN DIRECTED BY JAMES WAN



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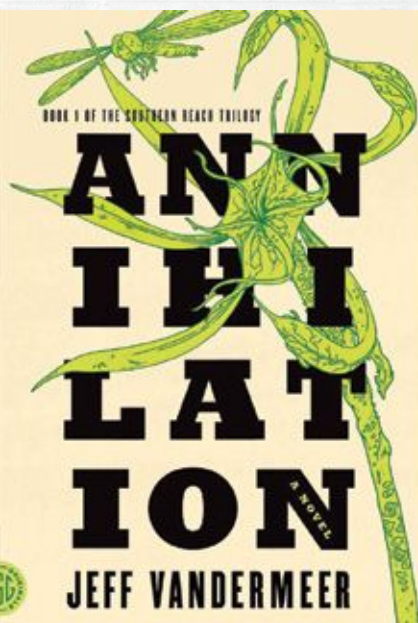


## Terry Gilliam restarts Don Quixote project

Terry Gilliam is dreaming the impossible dream again. The visionary filmmaker's efforts at adapting Miguel de Cervantes' early-17<sup>th</sup> Century literary classic *Don Quixote* have been well-documented. Between 1998 and 2015, Gilliam made no less than seven attempts to get *The Man Who Killed Don Quixote* up and running, with the likes of Gérard Depardieu, Johnny Depp and Ewan McGregor attached at various points. The 2002 documentary *Lost in La Mancha* chronicles the filmmaker's ill-fated odyssey. Gilliam wrote the screenplay with Tony Grisoni (*Fear and Loathing In Las Vegas*), with the main alteration made to the source material being the inclusion of an advertising executive named Toby Grisoni who is flung back in time, taking on the role of Don Quixote's sidekick. It appears that the story has since changed, with the ad exec instead being a modern-day filmmaker, perhaps as commentary on Gilliam's own struggles in making the film. John Hurt is set to play Don Quixote with Jack O'Connell co-starring as Grisoni. Hurt was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, this development further delaying the film, but fortunately, he has since been given the all-clear by his doctors and perhaps it will be eighth time lucky for the resilient Gilliam. With 2016 being the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cervantes' death, perhaps it's a good omen for Gilliam.

## Bradley Cooper dives Deeper

Bradley Cooper has boarded *Deeper*, a sci-fi thriller written by Max Landis (*Chronicle*, *American Ultra*, *Victor Frankenstein*). Hungarian director Kornél Mundruczó (*White God*) has also been attached to the spec script. Several studios, including Paramount, Lionsgate, STX, Black Box and Searchlight, are looking into the script and Cooper's involvement is expected to speed things up. The story revolves around a former astronaut tasked with piloting a submersible craft to the deepest point in the ocean. As the submersible nears its destination, other-worldly occurrences begin to unfold. Landis will co-produce the film with David S. Goyer. Landis recently made waves when his spec script *Bright* secured a \$90+ million deal with Netflix, with David Ayer set to direct and Will Smith and Joel Edgerton to star.



## Oscar Isaac to co-star with Natalie Portman in *Annihilation*

X-Men villain Oscar Isaac is going from *Apocalypse* to *Annihilation*, re-teaming with Ex Machina writer-director Alex Garland. The sci-fi horror film will be an adaptation of Jeff VanderMeer's 2014 novel of the same name. Isaac joins a cast which already includes Natalie Portman,

Gina Rodriguez and Jennifer Jason Leigh. The story follows a biologist (Portman) as she embarks on a four-person expedition into Area X, a region cordoned off from civilisation. While there, she must contain a mysterious contamination, figure out the truth behind her colleagues' vanishings, and fend off a fearsome being known as 'the Crawler', all while searching for clues regarding her husband's disappearance. Isaac is set to play Portman's on-screen husband. *Annihilation* won the 2014 Nebula Award for Best Novel, one of the highest honours for science-fiction writing in the United States.



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## Steven Spielberg to direct *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*

Superstar director Steven Spielberg has no shortage of projects to pick from, and it's confirmed that he will helm the historical drama *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara*. Spielberg has been linked to the project since 2008, and has announced that he will begin production on the film after he completes *Ready Player One*. *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* is based on a novel by David Kertzer, which is in turn based on a true story. The story revolves around the titular six-year-old Jewish boy, who in 1858, was seized by the police and removed from his parents' home. He was raised as a Catholic and became a priest in the Augustinian order; the case igniting heated discussion throughout Europe on the role of the Papal State. Acclaimed playwright and screenwriter Tony Kushner, who penned Spielberg's films *Munich* and *Lincoln*, is adapting Kertzer's book for the screen. Mark Rylance, who worked with Spielberg on *Bridge of Spies* and the upcoming *The BFG*, will star as Pope Pius IX.



## Spider-Man reboot gets official title

Following Spider-Man's appearance in *Captain America: Civil War*, the web-slinging superhero will get a new standalone film in 2017. At trade show CinemaCon, Sony revealed that the movie is titled *Spider-Man: Homecoming*. The film will be a co-production between Sony and Disney's Marvel Studios, after Sony leased the rights of the character to Marvel Studios to use in *Civil War*. Spider-Man was the original teen superhero, and *Homecoming* will focus on Parker's struggles to balance his high school life with his crime-fighting activities. Sony Pictures chief Tom Rothman described it as the conflict between "saving the world and getting your algebra homework done at the same time."

*Homecoming!* Is the name of the story in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #252, an issue released in 1984 that marks the first appearance of the Venom symbiote suit in the comics canon. Tom Holland will reprise his role from *Civil War*, with Marisa Tomei and Zendaya already cast as Aunt May and 'Michelle' respectively. Laura Harrier (*One Life to Live*) and Tony Revolori (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*) are also playing as-yet unspecified roles, with Robert Downey Jr. confirmed to appear as Tony Stark. Jon Watts is directing the film from a screenplay by John Francis Daley and Jonathan M. Goldstein.



## Boo Junfeng returns to Cannes with *Apprentice*

Singaporean filmmaker Boo Junfeng's second feature film, entitled *Apprentice*, has been selected to compete at the glitzy and prestigious Cannes Film Festival. The film will be in the running for the Prize Un Certain Regard in the festival under the Un Certain Regard section of the official selection. The section was introduced in 1978 and showcases "original and different" works each year. *Apprentice* is written and directed by Boo, and stars Wan Hanafi Su and Firdaus Rahman. The psychological drama revolves around a corrections officer who befriends the elderly chief executioner at a prison, who then decides to take on the young corrections officer as an apprentice executioner. Boo's first feature, the coming-of-age drama *Sandcastle* (2010), was part of International Critics' Week at Cannes in 2010. Boo was one of the directors who contributed to the anthology film *7 Letters*. The other films in this year's Un Certain Regard category include Hirokazu Kore-eda's *After the Storm* (Japan), Matt Ross' *Captain Fantastic* (U.S.) and Stephanie Di Giusto's *The Dancer* (France).







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## Jared Leto tangles with the Yakuza in **The Outsider**

Jared Leto will shed the unbridled, anarchic glee of the Joker for his next project, a dark crime thriller from director Martin Zandvliet. *The Outsider* is set in post-World War II Japan and revolves around an American prisoner-of-war who is released with the aid of his cellmate, a Yakuza gang member. The American soldier has to repay his debt and earn the respect of the Yakuza bosses as he wades through the murky criminal underbelly of Japan. *The Outsider* will be director Zandvliet's English-language debut; he helmed the critically-acclaimed Danish-German war film *Land of Mine*, about German soldiers forced to dig up land mines with their bare hands. The script is written by Andrew Baldwin (*Bastille Day*) and earlier had director Takashi Miike and star Tom Hardy attached to it.

## Solo **Batfleck** film is a go

Rumours of a standalone Batman film in the DC Extended Universe starring Ben Affleck as the Caped Crusader have been swirling in a semi-confirmed state for some time. At CinemaCon, Warner Bros. CEO Kevin Tsujihara made it official, announcing "we are working with Ben Affleck on a standalone Batman movie." Tsujihara did not confirm Affleck's involvement behind the camera, leaving speculation that he will direct and co-write the screenplay still up in the air. An official release date was also not given. In *Batman v Superman*, we glimpse a memorial in the Batcave containing a Robin suit vandalised with spray paint, with the Joker the likely perpetrator. Fans have taken this as a clue to the plot of the standalone film. In the comics, Jason Todd, the second Robin, was killed at the hands of the Joker. The arrival of a brutal vigilante known as the Red Hood forces Batman to revisit the tragic events of so long ago. It's a possibility that the film will draw inspiration from this story arc. Affleck will next appear as the Dark Knight in *Justice League: Part One*, due out in 2017.



## Ruh-roh! **Scooby Doo** reboot movie to launch **Hanna-Barbera** animated cinematic universe

Warner Bros. has been planning a big-screen reboot of *Scooby Doo* for some time, and at CinemaCon in Las Vegas, it was revealed that a new Hanna-Barbera cinematic universe will be built on the back of this movie. The new *Scooby Doo* animated film is entitled *S.C.O.O.B.* and is slated for a 2018 release. Other

properties produced by the studio that William Hanna and Joseph Barbera founded include *The Flintstones*, *Yogi Bear*, *The Jetsons*, *The Smurfs*, *Top Cat*, *Jonny Quest*, *Wacky Races* and *Sealab 2020*, among many other cartoons. It is not yet known how it will all be tied together, since the cartoons are set in several wildly disparate time periods. Warner Animation Group (WAG) is overseeing *S.C.O.O.B.* and the movies that will follow it within this universe. WAG is led by a brain trust that includes Phil Lord, Chris Miller, Nicholas Stoller, Glenn Ficarra, John Requa and Jared Stern.



## Benedict Cumberbatch to menace Whoville as **The Grinch**

Benedict Cumberbatch is known for his portrayal of the prickly, misanthropic Sherlock Holmes in the BBC show *Sherlock*, and will now play another famously anti-social character – the Dr. Seuss creation known as *The Grinch*. Illumination Entertainment, the animation studio behind *Despicable Me* and *The Minions*, announced at CinemaCon that they would be making a new CGI animated adaptation of the 1957 children's book *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*. Cumberbatch will be the third actor to portray the grumpy green-skinned Grinch, after Boris Karloff voiced the character in the 1966 animated TV special and Jim Carrey played the role in the 2000 live-action film. Cumberbatch's sonorous baritone will bring life to the Christmas-hating creature in November 2017.









## Charlize Theron and Scott Eastwood cruise into Fast 8

The expansive cast of the Fast and Furious franchise is getting a little more crowded with the addition of Charlize Theron and Scott Eastwood. Last month, we reported that Theron was director F. Gary Gray and screenwriter Chris Morgan's top choice to play the villain in the latest instalment. It's now official, with Furiousa herself menacing road warriors of a different stripe. Theron was approached by Universal Studios early in the development of the movie, but did not want to commit until the script was finished. She's now satisfied enough with Morgan's completed draft to sign on the dotted line. Eastwood is playing the protégé of Kurt Russell's spymaster character Mr. Nobody, with Russell himself also returning in Fast 8. Vin Diesel, Dwayne Johnson, Tyrese Gibson and Michelle Rodriguez are set to reprise their roles. Pedal will meet metal again come April 2017.



## K. Rajagopal's A Yellow Bird to compete at Cannes

In addition to *Apprentice*, another Singaporean film will be shown at Cannes. The debut feature film of Singapore filmmaker K. Rajagopal, *A Yellow Bird*, has been invited to compete at the 55th edition of La Semaine de la Critique (Critics' Week), a parallel section of the 69th Festival

de Cannes that takes place from 12 to 20 May 2016. The film will be up against six other first or second features for the section's top Nespresso Grand Prize, as well as the Camera d'Or, a prize dedicated to the Best First Feature at the entire festival.

The drama revolves around a Singaporean Indian man who is released from prison after serving eight years for contraband smuggling. Unable to find forgiveness from his mother, he goes on a quest for redemption, tracking down figures from his past, including his ex-wife and daughter. In the meantime, he finds work in a funeral band and befriends a Chinese woman who is working illegally to help her debt-ridden family back home in China. The film stars Siva Palakrishnan Huang Lu, Seema Biswas, Udaya Soundari, Nithiyia Rao and Indra Chandran. Rajagopal's short films include *I Can't Sleep Tonight*, *The Glare*, *Timeless*, *The New World* and *Brother*. He also contributed to the anthology film *7 Letters*. The Singapore-based Spanish filmmaker Fran Borgia, who produced and edited *A Yellow Bird*, is also the producer of *Apprentice*.



## Jason Statham to battle giant shark in Meg

Jason Statham was on the British National Diving Squad in his youth, so it's appropriate that he's headed back into the water for an upcoming blockbuster. The action star has signed on to play the lead in *Meg*, based on Steve Alten's 1997 best-selling novel, subtitled 'A Novel of Deep Terror'. The story revolves around a Carcharodon Megalodon, a gargantuan prehistoric shark and an ancestor of the Great White Shark, that is discovered in the Marianas Trench. The beast measures over 20 metres long and weighs over 35 tonnes. It's most likely that Statham will play the book's (human) protagonist Jonas Taylor, the lone survivor of the initial U.S. Navy expedition who is haunted by his near-death encounter, but whom nobody will believe until it's too late. The film has been in development for close to 20 years, with directors Jan de Bont and Eli Roth attached at various stages. *Meg* will finally see the light of day with Jon Turteltaub (National Treasure) directing from a script by James Vanderbilt (White House Down, The Amazing Spider-Man).



## Goodnight Sweet Prince: The Purple One Departs

Innumerable fans around the world were shocked and saddened by the sudden passing of Prince, who was found dead in an elevator in his home and recording studio complex Paisley Park in Minnesota. The gifted multi-instrumentalist, born Prince Rogers Nelson, was 57 and had a career spanning four decades. Shortly before his death, he had to reschedule several performances due to illness. Prince made his mark not only in music, but in movies as well. Prince starred as 'The Kid' in the semi-autobiographical 1984 rock musical film, *Purple Rain*. Prince won the Academy Award for Best Original Song Score for the titular song. He then directed and starred in *Under The Cherry Moon* in 1986 and *Graffiti Bridge* in 1990; both were lambasted by critics and underperformed at the box office. Prince famously contributed to the soundtrack for the 1989 Batman movie, which gave the world *Batdance*. Prince's eccentricity and refusal to be easily classified into any boxes added to his mystique and appeal. He was also aggressively protective of his intellectual property.





## Singaporean action thriller launches Indiegogo campaign

The Singaporean action thriller film *Burn*, starring and produced by Luke Lee (Ah Boys to Men), is seeking the help of fans, supporters of the local film industry and investors in the hopes of “creating an action movie Singapore can be proud of”. Lee stars as Shen, a former hitman enacting revenge against a criminal empire after he is left for dead by its founder. The production is launching a crowdfunding campaign on 3 May 2016, with Lee hoping to raise \$1 million out of the film’s projected budget of \$1.5-\$2 million. *Burn* is aiming for a theatrical release in Singapore and Asia in late-2016 to early-2017. The cast also includes Pamelyn Chee, Keagan Kang, Paul Foster and Fish Chaar, who will be performing their own stunts. Veteran actor Adrian Pang is currently in talks to play the villainous Sebastian, with the production courting international artistes who have featured in Hollywood films. Malaysian director James Lee, the founder of Doghouse 73 Pictures, is helming the film. “With the talents behind the project, *Burn* will redefine Southeast Asian action cinema,” director Lee proclaimed in a press release. Jennifer Phillips (*The Wolverine*, *Salt*, *Thor*, *Underworld: Awakening*) is *Burn*’s action director and fight choreographer.

## Robert Downey Jr. plans a Holmes-coming

Benedict Cumberbatch is making his debut as Doctor Strange soon, but he’s not the only Marvel Cinematic Universe actor to have played Sherlock Holmes. Robert Downey Jr. starred in the Guy Ritchie-directed Sherlock Holmes movies, playing the role in 2009 and 2011. Downey has his hands full with the upcoming two-part *Avengers: Infinity War* epic, but announced that he hopes to start work on a third Sherlock Holmes movie by the end of 2016. “We’re talking about it right now. We can do some preliminary stuff,” Downey told ShortList while promoting *Captain America: Civil War*. “If we could shoot it on Skype, we could have the whole [movie] done in a week,” Downey continued. “When we’re making those Sherlock movies it is off the hook. [So] we’ll attempt to make one this year. It really is a big deal to go and do those movies. I’m tired all the time, but I’m so excited about it.”



Lionel Wigram, who co-wrote the first two Sherlock Holmes movies and *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, is returning to pen the third instalment, joined by Drew Pearce (*Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation*, *Iron Man 3*). “I think we would all love to do one if we could come up with something that was really going to knock it out of the park and was going to be the best of the three,” Wigram said. “So we’re working on that – it’s quite hard to do.” Jude Law, the Watson to Downey’s Holmes, is also slated to return; he and Ritchie are currently finishing work on *King Arthur*.





## Marvel pulls Inhumans movie from schedule

The movie centring on the cosmic Marvel superhero team known as the Inhumans has found itself on shaky ground. After being pushed back from a late-2018 release to a mid-2019 date, Marvel has removed the film from its upcoming slate altogether. Marvel Studios head Kevin Feige clarified that this doesn't mean an Inhumans movie will not happen at all, saying "It's a question of when." Because the Inhumans are not explicitly linked to the main Avengers team members, it stands to reason that this movie has become less of a priority for Marvel. Guardians of the Galaxy was a risky venture that paid off, but perhaps the Marvel Studios brass views that as a fluke. In the comics, the Inhumans are the result of a genetic experiment conducted by the Kree aliens. The TV show Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. refers to its super-powered characters as 'Inhumans' and has linked the Kree into the back-story for these characters. Vin Diesel was apparently set to play Black Bolt, the leader of the Inhumans.



## Disney unveils upcoming live-action slate

Bolstered by the success of The Jungle Book, Disney is pushing its live-action adaptations of animated favourites big-time, announcing a packed schedule of upcoming movies. In addition to Jungle Book 2 being greenlit, Maleficent 2, with star Angelina Jolie returning in the title role, is officially a go. Cruella, the origin story of 101 Dalmatians villainess Cruella de Vil, has Emma Stone set to play the woman with puppy murder on her mind. Tim Burton is helming a remake of Dumbo and Reese Witherspoon will play the title role in Tinker Bell, centring on the mischievous fairy from Peter Pan. Lasse Halstrom is directing The Nutcracker and the Four Realms, an adaptation of Tchaikovsky's ballet. The Mary Poppins sequel, starring Emily Blunt and Broadway impresario Lin-Manuel Miranda, is on the slate too, with Rob Marshall directing. A Wrinkle in Time, the adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's renowned children's book, has Ava DuVernay officially attached to direct. Rounding out the list is Jungle Cruise, based on the Disneyland ride. Dwayne Johnson will star in the film, presumably an action-adventure.



## Chaos at Team Cap's Singapore visit

The arrival of Captain America: Civil War stars Chris Evans, Anthony Mackie and Sebastian Stan with co-director Joe Russo in Singapore should have been cause for celebration. However, large numbers of fans voiced their grievances on social media regarding the poor handling of the event. Before Team Cap even touched down on the island nation, there was confusion and frustration aimed at the VIP packages that were offered for sale by Reed Exhibitions, priced at \$688 and \$1288, which included Blue Carpet passes. Marina Bay Sands (MBS) jumped out to clarify that the event was free to the public, but there was a myriad of caveats that were not listed.

Some fans arrived at MBS as early as 6am for the event which was scheduled to begin at 7pm. However, the goalposts were moved – quite literally – as security personnel shifted fans about while the Blue Carpet was being set up. The gathering crowd pushing and shoving each

other, unsure of where to wait, meant a potential safety hazard, with a few women even reporting that they were molested. For many, Mackie was the saving grace, making extra effort to get to as many fans as possible. Russo followed after Mackie, the two jumping over barriers to reach fans. The following night, the Helix Bridge was barricaded, with a limited number of fans making their way onto it – capacity concerns were cited. The light show and fireworks display started a whole 50 minutes after its scheduled start time of 8pm. All in all, it was disheartening to see what ostensibly was a fan event that turned out to be so anti-fan.







## The Force Awakens clinches best movie at the MTV Movie Awards

What the MTV Movie Awards lack in prestige, it makes up for in entertainment value. The 2016 show was an eventful (if sometimes painfully unfunny) affair, thanks in no small part to the hosting duo of Dwayne Johnson and Kevin Hart. The pair made their entrance dressed in Mad Max-themed outfits, complete with flame-throwing guitars. The outfit changes included Johnson in Superman spandex and Hart as Batman. Johnson also sported a black shirt emblazoned with a yellow lightning bolt, the insignia of the supervillain Black Adam, whom he's set to play in the upcoming Shazam movie based on the DC Comics stories.



The full list of winners follows:

- Movie of the Year:** Star Wars: The Force Awakens
- Best True Story:** Straight Outta Compton
- Best Documentary:** Amy
- Best Female Performance:** Charlize Theron (Mad Max: Fury Road)
- Best Male Performance:** Chris Pratt (Jurassic World)
- Best Breakthrough Performance:** Daisy Ridley (Star Wars: The Force Awakens)
- Best Comedic Performance:** Ryan Reynolds (Deadpool)
- Best Action Performance:** Chris Pratt (Jurassic World)
- Best Hero:** Jennifer Lawrence (The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 2)
- Best Villain:** Adam Driver (Star Wars: The Force Awakens)
- Best Virtual Performance:** Amy Poehler (Inside Out)
- Best Ensemble Cast:** Pitch Perfect 2
- Best Kiss:** Rebel Wilson and Adam DeVine (Pitch Perfect 2)
- Best Fight:** Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds) vs. Ajax (Ed Skrein) (Deadpool)

### SPECIAL AWARDS:

- Generation Award:** Will Smith
- Comedic Genius Award:** Melissa McCarthy











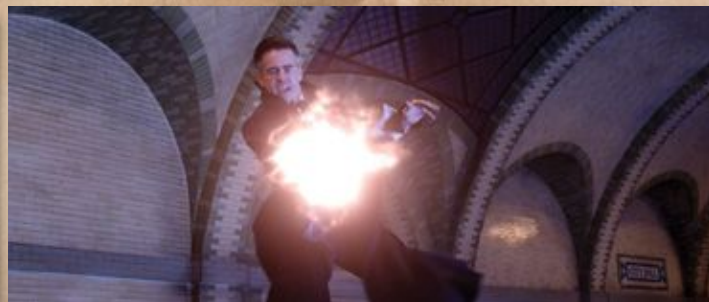
# ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

The teaser trailer for the first Star Wars spin-off debuted to much fanfare, attracting excitement and igniting more nostalgia in long-time fans of the space opera franchise. It's been described as akin to war films like *The Dirty Dozen* and *Saving Private Ryan*. *Rogue One* is set shortly before the events of Episode IV, and revolves around a crack team of Rebellion agents on a covert mission to recover the plans to the Imperial superweapon known as the Death Star. The leader of the team is Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones), an outcast with a petty criminal past who finds her calling among the Rebels. Diego Luna, Riz Ahmed, Ben Mendelsohn, Donnie Yen, Jiang Wen, Forest Whitaker, Mads Mikkelsen and Alan Tudyk round out the ensemble. Genevieve O'Reilly, who played Mon Mothma in Episode III, reprises her role as the co-founder and leader of the Rebel Alliance. The role was originated by Caroline Blakiston in Episode VI.

The trailer abounds with familiar imagery from the heyday of Star Wars, including Imperial Stormtroopers in their classic armour, towering AT-AT walkers and a monolithic Star Destroyer. Hot on the heels of Daisy Ridley's Rey in *The Force Awakens*, the Star Wars franchise is delivering another badass female lead in the form of Jyn Erso, in addition to bringing back female authority figure Mon Mothma to the big screen. We also catch a glimpse of Donnie Yen in action, wielding a staff and in the midst of raining an epic smackdown on some unfortunate Stormtroopers. Ben Mendelsohn's Imperial officer looks a whole lot like he could just be Grand Moff Tarkin, played by Peter Cushing in Episode IV. The strains of the Imperial March also hint that Darth Vader himself could make a highly-anticipated appearance.

Forest Whitaker's character, sporting a scar, is reportedly a veteran of the Clone Wars. "What will you do when they catch you?" he asks ominously. "What will you do if they break you? If you continue to fight... What will you become?" The final shot of the trailer features Jyn clad in the garb of an Imperial pilot – i.e. the enemy. Is she undercover? Is it a flashback? Does she switch sides? Is it a dream sequence? These burning questions and more will be answered in December 2016 when *Rogue One*, directed by Gareth Edwards (*Godzilla*) and written by Gary Whitta (*The Book of Eli*), makes its hyperspace jump into theatres.









# FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

The first trailer for Harry Potter spin-off *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* aired during the MTV Movie Awards, with Eddie Redmayne stepping out of a suitcase on stage to introduce the trailer. Redmayne stars as Newt Scamander, a magizoologist who travels from England to the U.S., specifically New York, during the roaring '20s. Scamander is in town to meet a member of the Magical Congress of the United States Of America (MACUSA), the American equivalent of the U.K.'s Ministry of Magic. When Scamander's briefcase containing other-worldly beasts is accidentally opened, setting all manner of creatures loose in the city, he is suddenly a wanted fugitive with MACUSA Auror Percival Graves (Colin Farrell) on his tail. Scamander has to rely on MACUSA employee Porpentina 'Tina' Goldstein (Katherine Waterston) to re-capture the escaped monsters and prove his innocence. In the meantime, the New Salem Philanthropic Society is out on a literal witch-hunt for magic-users in America.

The film also stars Dan Fogler as Scamander's No-maj (the American term for 'muggle') friend Jacob Kowalski, Carmen Ejogo as MACUSA president Seraphina Picquery, Alison Sudol as Tina's younger sister Queenie and Ezra Miller as a mysterious wizard rumoured to be named 'Credence'. Wrangling the beasts behind the camera is David Yates, who also directed the last four films in the Harry Potter series. Warner Bros. initially wanted *Prisoner of Azkaban* helmer Alfonso Cuarón to return for the spin-off, but Cuarón declined, citing a desire to do something different. The screenplay is written by J.K. Rowling herself.

The trailer presents us with a vividly realised, slightly stylised vision of 20s New York, with Redmayne fitting right into the period setting. Besides glimpses of the titular beasts, we're also teased with connections to characters we know and love: Scamander was expelled from Hogwarts (Hufflepuff) where he was a favoured student of Dumbledore, a young teacher at the time. The film takes its title from the textbook Scamander wrote, which was seen as one of Harry Potter's study materials in *The Philosopher's Stone*. His name also popped up on the Marauder's Map in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. The Beasts will run wild in November 2016.





# POWER RANGERS

Rita Repulsa, the alien witch arch-nemesis of the Power Rangers, is often thought of as one of the most gleefully over-the-top villains in fiction. We now have our first taste of Elizabeth Banks' portrayal of Rita in the 2017 *Power Rangers* movie. The design, with his predominantly green colour scheme, prosthetics used to enhance Banks' facial structure and the markings on her forehead, has a reptilian vibe about it. "It's definitely a modern and edgy re-imagining of the original Rita Repulsa," Banks told *People* magazine. "We wanted to give her a backstory that connects her to the new Rangers."

Linking the back-story of the heroes and villains is something several film adaptations of existing material have done to speed up the narrative and make things clearer for new audiences, with varying degrees of success. It's worth noting that in the *Power Rangers* TV show, Rita has been at war with the galactic sage Zordon for ages. Zordon provided the Rangers with their 'morphin' technology. It is rumoured that this film's prologue will establish the eons-long conflict between Rita and Zordon.

Screenwriters Max Landis (*Chronicle*), John Gatins (*Real Steel*), Matt Sazama and Burk Sharpless (*Gods of Egypt*), and Zack Stentz and Ashley Miller (*Thor*, *X-Men First Class*) are all credited writers, evidence of a somewhat tortured production process. Dean Israelite (*Project Almanac*) is directing. Apart from Banks, the cast includes relative newcomer Dacre Montgomery as Jason the Red Ranger; Naomi Scott (*Terra Nova*, *The Martian*) as Kimberly the Pink Ranger; RJ Cyler (*Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*) as Billy the Blue Ranger; Ludi Lin (*Monster Hunt*) as Zack the Black Ranger; and pop singer Becky Gomez as Trini the Yellow Ranger. The Rangers will go head-to-head with Rita Repulsa in March 2017.









# DOCTOR STRANGE

The Marvel Cinematic Universe has ventured beyond the confines of earth, and now it will go past this earthly plane into realms unknown. Dr. Stephen Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch) is a gifted and highly successful neuro-surgeon who has his career brutally cut short when he is caught in a car accident. His life as he's known it now shattered, Strange embarks on a journey of self-discovery. He encounters a powerful mystic known as The Ancient One (Tilda Swinton), who guides him in becoming a sorcerer.

The film also stars Chiwetel Ejiofor as Karl Mordo, who in the comics is a major Doctor Strange villain. The film is apparently taking a different tack by making Mordo a more ambiguous character. In the comics, Mordo studied under the Ancient One alongside Strange; it appears this aspect of his back-story will be retained.

The production drew considerable flack for casting Swinton as The Ancient One, typically depicted in the comics as a very elderly Tibetan holy man. Marvel Studios head honcho Kevin Feige explained that the Ancient One is seen as a mantle passed down over the generations, hence the decision to cast non-traditionally. Presumably, there was also a desire to avoid the stereotypical nature of an all-knowing Asian mystic teaching a white man martial arts and magic. "There is no other character in Marvel history that is such a cultural land mine that is absolutely unwinnable," co-writer C. Robert Cargill rationalised. Swinton is known for her androgynous qualities, and even though The Ancient One is referred to by the pronouns 'her' and 'she' in the film, Swinton's portrayal is intended to be ambiguous.

Mads Mikkelsen portrays the villain of the piece, the actual name of the character as yet unrevealed. Fans have speculated that Mikkelsen is playing the powerful demonic entity Dormammu, who has crossed paths with the likes of Loki, Ghost Rider and the Guardians of the Galaxy in the comics. Rachel McAdams plays a fellow surgeon at the hospital where Strange works, and Benedict Wong is playing Wong, Strange's dutiful valet. Michael Stuhlbarg, Amy Landecker and Scott Adkins round out the cast.

The trailer promises the trippiest MCU movie yet, replete with imagery reminiscent of *Inception*, *The Matrix* and *Batman Begins*. Director Scott Derrickson revealed that *Guardians of the Galaxy* helmer James Gunn provided his input on the script, which is credited to Derrickson, Cargill and Jon Spaihts (*Prometheus*, *Passengers*). Doctor Strange will astral-project into cinemas in November 2016.















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# WTF

WE TALK FILMS

## **X-MEN: APOCALYPSE**

F\*\*\* Talks To Troop Leader Bryan Singer,  
Big Baddie Oscar Issac & Mean Baldie  
James Mcavoy

## **THE MAN WHO KNEW INFINITY**

Dev Patel Counts Himself Lucky

## **SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS**

Eric Bana Smooth Talks

## **GAMES OF THRONES**

Issac Hempstead Wright Grows Up

## **SUPERGIRL**

Melissa Benoist

And More...

# X-TRA ORDINARY MEN

DIRTY DOZEN OF YOUR NOT-SO-AVERAGE JOES



# Rallying The **TROOPS**

Director/producer Bryan Singer on how *X-Men: Apocalypse*  
is the biggest X-Men movie yet







## ***In X-Men: Apocalypse, we find our favourite group of mutants in 1983, dealing with more than just the fashions of the time.***

An ancient, powerful and extremely angry creature named Apocalypse has awakened after millennia spent slumbering, decided that our civilisation is too corrupt to survive and must be destroyed so he can restore proper order. Charles Xavier must rally his young students for the fight of their lives against not just Apocalypse, but also his powerful Four Horsemen, one of which just happens to be Erik 'Magneto' Lensherr...

Once more rallying the troops behind the camera is Bryan Singer, who worked on the story for the new film and returns to direct and produce after the huge smash hit that was 2014's *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*. An experienced writer, director, and producer, he's been responsible for films including *The Usual Suspects*, *Valkyrie* and *Superman Returns*. He's also the man who originally brought the X-Men to the big screen back in 2000, and has been overseeing the films featuring the younger versions of the characters since producing 2011's *X-Men: First Class*. Singer talks about finding the reality in a god-like character, filming more than a month for a two-minute scene and how much fun it is to talk metaphysics with one of his cast.

### **What was the appeal of *X-Men: Apocalypse*?**

I was very fascinated by the notion of ancient mutant powers, and what a mutant would think he or she was if they were born 20 or 30,000 thousand years ago. And they would, of course, think they were a god, and would behave like that. And they would be looked at and worshiped like a god. And then I started looking at what happens to gods over the years, various religions and I started thinking of the god of the Old Testament and Oscar Isaac and I were talking about cults, because cult leaders very often think they're gods. That sort of gave me the justification for the Four Horsemen, each one represents a division of the cult – Magneto (Michael Fassbender) would be the political division; Archangel (Ben Hardy), represents the military division; and the sexual component, because every cult has that, would be Psylocke (Olivia Munn); and then finally there's the youth division, the new recruits that you want in your cult and that would be young Storm (Alexandra Shipp). And so it evolved from there as this character who believed that it was his responsibility to build a society and to take away the savagery of Man. But if society ever defied him or became disillusioned by him, as the god of the Old Testament would do, he would be vengeful and he would open up the earth and wipe them out. It occurred to me that Apocalypse, over the millennia, had done this many times: the Babylonians, the Arcadians, the Sumerians, and he'd been called many gods over many lifetimes. And suddenly he wakes up in 1983 and he sees that the civilisations are no longer in individual parts of the world, like Egypt or China or wherever, the world is interconnected by television, by radio, the nations are interconnected by oil and power. There are false idols, where people worship money, and man now possesses nuclear weapons, which gives him a sense of god-like power, and this does not work for Apocalypse.

So Apocalypse wants to put an end to it and start everything fresh again. He goes on a process of recruiting his Horsemen and re-shaping the entire Earth in his image.

### **He's been portrayed in the comics and in the animated series. How did you want to change him? Or did you? And how did you bring him to life?**

I dabbled with the notion of making him a giant and then I really felt he needed to relate to the characters initially. You will see him large in the movie as well, so there'll be that satisfaction. But I also felt he needed to exert his powers of persuasion. And that's why I went with someone who is a really fine actor and instead of just throwing him in a digital costume and animating him, I wanted to have him play the role with my other actors and make him real. There are some pretty spectacular things that occur, but it was important for me and the audience, I think, to feel a sense of realness, that he's a real being, that he's inhabiting a real body. That body can change, but at its heart, I didn't want to lose the actor inside of CGI animation.

### **It's not every director who has the chance to create fresh versions of characters he himself initially brought to the screen. How was it bringing in the new Storm, Cyclops, and the rest?**

It's a lot of fun because you don't feel like you're rebooting anything, you don't feel like you're re-casting anyone, you just feel like you're creating a younger version. There's still an older Magneto, who will always be Ian McKellen to me; there's a younger one, there's Michael Fassbender, who I helped cast in *X-Men: First Class*. And then again it was round three with Jean and Scott. *X-Men: First Class*, which I produced and wrote the story for, that to me was the wind-up to get us to the place where we







would eventually get to meet young Jean, Storm, and Scott. And ultimately form the X-Men. Because they haven't really formed yet. We've seen the older X-Men already having existed a long time, but we've never seen them form. They almost form in *X-Men: First Class*, but most of them are killed and now the world is different. The world has embraced mutants somewhat and so this movie goes about not just introducing new characters or having fun casting a version of Famke Janssen or Halle Berry, or James Marsden from the past, but also forming the team and explaining why there would be X-Men. Not just students who go to Xavier's school, I understand that those are outcasts who want to belong in a place, especially a place as beautiful as that, but why X-Men? Why a fighting force of mutants? What's the need for that? And this tells that story as well, which I got to do finally.

**One of the characters you brought to life wonderfully before was Nightcrawler. Did you want to give the younger version that same soulfulness?**

He's a different kind of guy than the way Alan (Cumming) played him. Alan is the tougher version because he's older. Kodi (Smit-McPhee) is so spiritual and so intelligent and so sensitive and so sweet a person that to then dress him up like the devil and cover him in scars and put him in the situation the movie puts him in, he inhabits the youthful innocence of the devilish face, for lack of a better expression. Imagine this most innocent character who is cursed with this extraordinary power and his strange physical appearance. With Kodi... Our first meeting I thought was going to be about 15 minutes, but it ended up being almost two hours long, and we talked more about metaphysics and history and quantum mechanics than we did about acting, so he's got a great spirit. I call him the Prophet.

**You're bringing back Evan Peters as Quicksilver from *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*. How are you going to match his big scene from that film?**

Well, I can tell you that we do have a sequence that is two minutes long, and it took us over a month and a half to shoot, and it uses some of the most complex cinematic technology that exists and some physical technology. We were shooting at 3,000 frames per second; using the new Phantom cameras in 3D; and using explosive algorithms and real detonations for this one part. Evan Peters ended up working at least 17 days on this one two-minute sequence, so oddly enough, Evan worked more days than anyone else in the entire scene. It's a slightly different scene: it may not be as humorous as *Days*, or it might be a little bittersweet, but it definitely will be unique.

**You've always focused on telling good stories with the core characters. What were the themes you wanted to hit with them this time?**

I really wanted to reinforce the different ways that Charles (James McAvoy) and Raven (Jennifer Lawrence) view the world. Since the world became aware of mutants in 1973, Charles has lived in relative bliss. His school is thriving,



he wants to turn it into a university, and he believes truly that things have changed. Raven has seen a darker side of the world. She's hidden away from her blue form, because since she saved the president at the end of the last movie, the blue girl as they call her, Mystique, has become a symbol of a world she does not believe exists. She does not believe that people will still embrace mutants; she's seen the darker side of it. So she confronts Charles on it. He has no intent of forming a fighting force of any kind and it's her that says, "You don't understand... it's not over yet. You can't just teach these kids maths and reading, you're going to have to teach them to fight. Just because we're not at war doesn't mean we're at peace." They have polarising views of where the world has come in the last 10 years and how that foment into the formation of the X-Men.

**Erik is off in his own story initially; so what is he dealing with?**

Yeah, he's off the grid and has made a decision that he's tired of fighting the fight and maybe what he was meant to do is live the life of his parents in Poland... work a steady job and stay out of people's way. But circumstances intervene and bring him out again, and again, he becomes part of the problem.

**The movies are also these big popcorn spectacles. And despite the size of *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, this might be bigger...**

Yes, in terms of scope and visuals, it's a much bigger movie. *Days* was time travel, some robots, but mostly a lot of heists! Whereas this one is global destruction, god-like characters, stuff like that... a much bigger film. We never lose our heart, and the characters, we cling to those because they are very important. But it will definitely be a lot more spectacle this time around.

**Apart from the Quicksilver scene, what was the most challenging thing to pull off this time?**

Bringing Apocalypse to life as a character. We did something unique to create his voice. I wanted to stay true to him as a real person so he could interact with the others, but when it came to his voice, I did something different that I don't believe has been done before. I re-voiced him – it's still Oscar's voice – but when I dubbed him during ADR, as well as a standard Sennheiser microphone, I also used a bass mic to his right cheek, and to his left cheek I used a bass drum mic, like a musician's mic, so I could pull vocal tones from his voice that would not normally be heard by the human ear. I could use all of that to augment his voice, and that was a real challenge and really interesting to do physically, and not just mess around with the electronics and sound. Oscar always had to keep his head in the right spot, though, with three microphones at his face!









# The **PROFESSOR** Is In

James McAvoy faces an apocalypse along with his fellow X-Men  
in *X-Men: Apocalypse*, while also dealing with going bald...







## Following the huge success of *X-Men: Days Of Future Past* in 2014, the heroes are back to face their biggest threat yet.

In *X-Men: Apocalypse*, an ancient, incredibly powerful mutant once worshipped as a god awakens in 1983. Disgusted with what he sees of the current world, he decides our civilization must be torn down before a new one can be built.

This doesn't exactly make life easier for Professor Charles Xavier, who has finally got his school for gifted youngsters up and running and is trying to teach the next generation of mutants how to live in peace with the rest of humanity. James McAvoy, the man behind the prof, talks about the family dynamic, off-duty fun and accepting the passing of the "baldy torch".

### Where do we find the Professor's headspace this time?

He's quite chilled out, really, at least at the beginning of the film. He's got himself sorted out, but he isn't yet the leader that he'll become. He's just a teacher, and that's how he sees the rest of his life; just being an educator. He's not concerned about the rest of the world, he's just trying to change it one kid at a time, really. I suppose the arc for his particular character – within the many arcs of the film – is how he goes from that into being a leader of what is essentially a paramilitary organisation with an army of super humans in a basement! And somebody who is willing to fight, and potentially kill, by the end of the movie.

### From the sounds of it, he does go through yet another dark experience....

Yeah, definitely. He literally gets drawn into the mind of *Apocalypse* (Oscar Isaac) and all the darkness that is hidden in there. But Charles' power goes beyond his telepathic ability. I think his power is that he has huge empathy for others and he uses that power to find hope. He can still do that amongst all the darkness, to find the goodness and the heart in others. Not necessarily *Apocalypse*... But those around him, and that's reason enough to carry on. Even though he's had to deal with so many terrible things happening to him in his personal life, it's nothing compared to what's been happening to Erik (Lenscherr, played by Michael Fassbender)! He's had so many family members killed and executed. Whereas Charles has been put through torture himself, but in a weird way, it's harder to see those you love go through it.

### And for you, it's a nice acting challenge through these experiences. Is it still draining?

Yes and no. Because the more challenging it is to play something, weirdly, I think the easier it is. When it's not challenging, you're just wondering, 'What do I do, then?' So the more complex and the more emotional stuff there is to get your teeth into definitely makes it more exacting, but is easier intellectually and artistically to approach it.



### How did Bryan pitch this one?

What Bryan and Simon Kinberg spoke to us about initially was that it's about family, really. It's a big old crash bang wallop, and it's a big superhero movie with potential armageddon (or apocalypse), but for us, it's about a disparate and unconventional family having to put aside their differences and come together for the greater good of not just the world, but themselves as well. That's the thing I like about *X-Men*: you're doing these characters who've been living and working – some of them having sex – loving and hating each other, trying to kill each other, then trying to save each other and that's families, you know? That's the thing I've held on to all the way through, we're not just a bunch of *X-Men*.

Charles wants to be with his friends, with Raven (Jennifer Lawrence), with Erik. That's partly why he's building a school and he wants that family that he never really had and he wants to be the father. He's got that slight... he's a good man, but he's got a little bit of a god complex as well. He wants to be at the head of the table. It's a good thing, but it's his flaw as well.

### You have some new recruits and new faces, such as Oscar. How was it working with him?

We were lucky in that we've got a really tight bunch. In the last movie, Hugh (Jackman) came in and Peter Dinklage, and it was like they'd

always been there. And in this movie, we had Oscar, and he was great. He's an awesome dude and a true professional. So he just fit right in, dead easy. When you've got somebody that good coming in for one movie, it gives everyone a shake up and they raise their game again. We're lucky, really – the calibre of actors we've had in *X-Men* has always been really high and long may that continue! If they're as good as Oscar Isaac, we'll be laughing.

### You have your new team as well. Did you have to become the father figure to the new *X-Men*? Or was it just lots of crazy nights out?

We have a good time in Montreal, we definitely do, but I would never presume to be able to teach anybody anything or to set an example. You set an example by the way you carry yourself and the way you work. Outside of that, you're just trying to get home without getting too drunk...

### On *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, you talked about fun times behind the scenes, including BB gun fights. Was there anything like that this time?

We had BB guns again; we had beanbag targeting games; we had a punching game, which didn't get quite as out of hand in the previous film; and then there was a slapping game that was around for a brief time before





that got a bit too dangerous! It was the usual X-Men fooling around.

***X-Men: Apocalypse* is set in the 1980s, so does Charles go through a New Romantics phase? What style does he get into this time?**

Charles looks like he's been watching a lot of *Miami Vice* this time, and he's definitely trying to rock a Don Johnson kind of look. And I'm really glad we went for it because it's one of the joys of being able to deal with these different decades, getting to explore the music and the fashion and the culture of the time.

**We now get to see Charles in his most iconic look. So how was the famous baldness achieved?**

I went full bald! Shaved my own head. Luckily Patrick (Stewart) was available for face-timing, so he was present digitally for the passing of the baldy torch. But it was cool to do it for real, we had some re-shoots where I had to have a bald cap for one scene and that was it.

**How was it?**

I like it! If I didn't have to grow my hair back for my next movie, I'd stay bald. After 36 years of having hair, it's nice to change your look completely.

**Did it change how you played him at all?**

He's a different person by the end of the movie, and he also happens to be bald. But it's not because he's bald!

**This is Bryan's second time as director with you guys. He's been involved from the start, but is it still different working with him after *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*?**

One of the strengths of X-Men is that we do know each other so well, and the actors are similar in that we're all quite professional and we all worked really hard to make it as good as we can, and we don't mess around too much when we're on set. But we have support for each other, and Bryan is definitely part of that. He shows a lot of love for everybody. And also nobody knows the genre and these characters better than he does as a director, so we're with the right guy.

**This one feels like it will be even bigger than *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*.**

It is bigger. I know people always say that, but it's on a global scale. You're talking about the annihilation of the human race, really! But the thing that juxtaposes that is that it comes down to whether this family can get their shit together to stop that. It's two polar opposites; it's like a microcosm family drama and it's also the end of the human race. That's what I thought was exciting about it.

**How are Charles and Nicholas Hoult's Hank this time? You two were a good duo before.**

We're like an odd couple rattling around in this mansion, supporting each other. I'd quite like to see a film like *The Odd Couple* just about Hank and Charles, to be honest with you, bitching about who makes the sandwiches for the kids and who washes all the dirty underwear. There's an implication that we've come to rely on each other a great deal in the last decade.

**So if Charles fancies himself the father figure, does that make Hank the mum?**

No! I think Hank is the elder brother. Don't tell Nick that!

**This is the third film together. Do you guys know where the story goes from here? Will you come back if asked?**

Simon has told us a lot about his various ideas for where the story could go, and some of them sound really interesting to me, so if they came back and asked me to be in another one, I'd take a look at the script and see if it was a part I wanted to play. But yeah, potentially it's something I would love to do, because I love playing Charles, and Simon keeps writing interesting things for me to do. So if that continues, I'm in.



# APOCALYPSE NOW

Oscar Isaac on playing a complicated, god-like figure in  
*X-Men: Apocalypse*









If the X-Men thought they'd faced their biggest challenge with altered timelines and killer robots in 2014's *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, they've got a powerful new think coming.



*X-Men: Apocalypse* sees an ancient, incredibly formidable mutant awaken from thousands of years of slumber and decide that the world of the 1980s needs a giant reset.

Bringing to life this complicated, god-like figure is the talented Oscar Isaac. Since his big break in 2002's *All About The Benjamins*, Isaac has been working consistently in film, appearing in the likes of *Body Of Lies*, *Sucker Punch*, *The Bourne Legacy*, *Inside Llewyn Davis*, *A Most Violent Year*, and in 2015 alone, made a huge impact in both *Ex Machina* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

He talks *X-Men: Apocalypse*'s philosophy, his own X-Men fandom and working with the "pit crew" who helped get him in and out of costume.

#### What was your familiarity with the X-Men?

I was a big X-Men comics fan! I collected X-Factor in particular, which I really liked, and which features the first appearance of Apocalypse. It's actually because of that, because of how much I loved the character, that when I found out that they were making an X-Men movie with Apocalypse as the villain, I sought it out. I was very curious about what they were going to do with it.

#### How did Bryan pitch the angle on him?

Basically, the idea is, "Imagine that God has been buried for the last 3,000 years, and he wakes up tomorrow and he takes a look around and realises, 'No, we've ruined everything, this is not what it was supposed to be,' and decides to change things." That's it: what if God wakes up and he's pissed! It's the concept of the second coming, Christ returns to take the chosen ones and all the rest will be destroyed along with the world. It's really intense, it's really heavy and so this character is the embodiment of that idea. Or at least, as someone who believes that is their mission. On the other side of it, the non-religious side, there's, "What if this guy was the first mutant, and what if his power was that he was the first being to be able to actually, physically separate their consciousness from their body, to have, for all intents and purposes, a biological soul?" It's also that sci-fi notion that I thought was very interesting in a fun, mind-bending way.

What's also fun is drawing from the different iterations of the comic. Because he's changed quite a lot from series to series, whether it's Apocalypse Vs. Dracula or the original '80s X-Factor or the cartoon. He moves from host

to host and that's part of the plan, and then at some point that gets interrupted for many thousands of years. When he awakens, he decides he's the steward of the rest of humanity and of evolution, not only physical or biological, but spiritual, and when that's in danger, he clears the forest for new growth, like he's done many times in the past.

**X-Men movies always have big themes, and it feels like he brings that too.**

Yeah. It's a purging that's happening, so that's part of the bigger theme. And this idea of a wrathful god and what that means. But "apocalypse" as a word doesn't necessarily mean "destroy". It means "reveal", and he's revealing the true potential of their power, of the people that choose to follow him. It's partly *why* they follow him: because they see that this being actually allows for their most powerful self to emerge. And that's one of his greatest strengths, his power of persuasion.

**How was he brought to life? Was it a tough job?**

The design was challenging. My entire head was encapsulated in prosthetics and glue and plastic and tubes. What was fun about that was I was able to express quite a lot through that because of how thin it was. The suit was 40 pounds, and I had to wear a cooling mechanism underneath and my range of motion was incredibly limited. So for me, it became a challenge of how to express that in a different way. Obviously, we're not doing naturalism here; it's more akin to Greek tragedy and Kabuki theatre. I actually watched some Kabuki, paying attention to the physical traits that they used, because, for them, even small gestures are so important. Then I'd





have to figure out how to work within it. What seemed most expressive, what was too much, what was not enough. I had an incredible make-up crew, guys from Legacy Effects, and they were fantastic and there the entire time, making little tweaks and adjustments.

**Did they make it easier for you to get in and out of it?**

Yeah, that was a process. At first, it was a three-to four-hour make-up job, and as the time went on, we got it down to about an hour, which was pretty astounding. And I had some great wardrobe people who were like a pit crew at all times; two costumers who would rip the thing off of me, because the heat was so intense and the make-up guys would come in and try to fix it up in between takes. Everyone found a way to do it so fast. At the beginning, it would take me 40 minutes just to put the suit on and we got that down to 15 minutes, so it was a very impressive team of people. And this is not even mentioning the CG that gets added later to aspects of the character, particularly in certain moments of the movie. So it really is a team effort to make this character come to life.

**How did the cast welcome you? They seem like a fun bunch.**

Apart from being Apocalypse, being able to work with Michael Fassbender, James McAvoy, Nick Hoult and Jen Lawrence, in particular, was so much fun. They're so funny, relaxed and have two of these movies under their belts, so that was helpful, getting a sense of how they work. At first, most of my scenes were with Michael and that was an instant friendship and as great as I'd hoped it would be. So that really was the highlight for me, getting to meet those guys and working with them.

**Did Jennifer commiserate with you about the makeup situation?**

Oh yeah! I was her brother in blue! I felt her pain for sure.

**How was it working with Bryan?**

He's incredibly collaborative and such a smart man, and really switched on into the themes of the story and what we're trying to do there. I had a great time with him and Simon Kinberg just talking about what's possible with this character and how to make it something interesting and special, not only for the audience but also for us; what did we want to explore so we could make it personal? And he was very open to those ideas and to playing with the themes and the dialogue and I really

enjoyed that.

**Is there something you're glad you brought to *X-Men: Apocalypse*?**

I think connecting it to a real spiritual idea; that aspect was interesting to me. There were a few things that we came up with dialogue-wise in the whole thing that I was really glad about, but I can't say any of those without spoiling things! We wanted some things that were unexpected.

***X-Men: Days Of Future Past* was huge in terms of scale and success. What can we expect from *X-Men: Apocalypse*?**

What we can expect is the idea that family is still a huge thing. It's a huge scale; this is the biggest one yet. And real conflicts for them, for one of the first times. They're fighting against each other, not only for the survival of the world, but of what the X-Men are.

**And are you now going to pitch *Apocalypse Vs. Dracula*?**

Yeah! We'll do a spin-off!

***X-Men: Apocalypse* opens on 19 May 2016.**



## Who's who in the X-Men universe

### 1 Professor Charles Xavier

Charles Xavier has one of the most powerful telepathic minds on earth. Using his acute powers, he can detect when other mutants are nearby, read the minds of others and communicate telepathically. Charles is a scientific genius, a teacher and father figure to many; he believes in a peaceful co-existence between mutants and humans. Sadly, an accident involving friend-turned-foe Erik Lehnsherr left Xavier paralysed from the waist down, a weakness that often plagues him.

In the 1960s, Charles founded Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. In the ten years since *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, Professor Xavier has rededicated himself to building his school as a safe haven for young mutants to learn how to control their powers and pursue their education without fear of prejudice.

### 2 Erik Lehnsherr/Magneto

Erik Lehnsherr, also known as Magneto, is one of the world's most powerful mutants and the X-Men's most dangerous foe. His incredible ability to manipulate magnetic fields allows him to control all forms of metal. Unlike Charles Xavier, who dreams of peaceful co-existence between humans and mutants, Magneto believes the only way he can protect his fellow mutants from persecution is by conquering the earth.

Last seen at the end of *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, Magneto vanishes after failing in his attempt to assassinate the president – fleeing the scene after seemingly being 'let go' by Professor Xavier. While it has been 10 years since he has been seen or heard from, his silence and absence have benefited the progress of mutant integration into society.

### 3 Raven Darkholme/Mystique

Raven Darkholme, also known by as Mystique, possesses the mutant ability to shape shift, thereby taking on the likeness of anyone else. Raven is a smart and intuitive character; she has a long history together with Charles and Eric, and was part of Charles' original group of X-Men.

Since saving the president in *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, Raven has become a symbol of hope and change for the new mutant-integrated world. But Raven is disenchanted by the false glory; she knows that many mutants are still living in fear of persecution. In *X-Men: Apocalypse*, she continues her one-woman mission of saving mutants who are being hunted, abused and enslaved.

### 4 Hank McCoy/Beast

Hank McCoy was one of the earliest recruits to the X-Men, and is Charles' closest friend and confidant. In his furry blue form, he is known as Beast, whose mutant power grants him genius-level intellect, as well as enhanced strength, speed and agility. Despite his astonishing strength as a fighter, he prefers to use his intellect to his fists when attacking a problem.

### 5 Apocalypse

Apocalypse is perhaps the most powerful mutant in the X-Men universe. He is believed to be the world's first mutant having existed for thousands of years. His mutant powers give him eternal life, as he is able to transfer his consciousness to other host bodies. Among his other powers, he is able to manipulate matter at a molecular level, allowing him to transform anything including himself, communicate with any form of technology, and teleport and bridge his physical location to any destination he desires. In addition to his seemingly God-like powers and immortality, a key recurring element of Apocalypse's legacy throughout history is the elite quartet of mutant soldiers he always surrounds himself with, known as the Four Horsemen.

### 6 Moira MacTaggart

Dr. Moira MacTaggart is an agent with the CIA. MacTaggart has a history with the X-Men going back nearly two decades, when she was part of the mission to stop the Cuban Missile Crisis. Charles Xavier, who was once her love interest, erased MacTaggart's memory so that she, nor the X-Men, would not be endangered by what they had shared. Now, Moira again joins forces with Charles and the X-Men in their battle to stop Apocalypse's path of global destruction.

### 7 Peter Maximoff/Quicksilver

Quicksilver uses his power, extreme super speed, to get in and out of places without being noticed. He is a witty and sarcastic character. A decade has passed since mutants have been living openly among the humans and Peter is still living in his mother's basement.

### 8 Jean Grey

Jean Grey is a mutant with advanced telepathic and telekinetic abilities. She is a powerful mutant but a timid young woman who feels like she doesn't fit in. Her unrestrained power is something that frightens the other students and makes her somewhat of an outcast, even among other mutants. Professor X takes her under his wing as a father figure, recognising that she has the potential to eventually be even more powerful than he is. She's also the long-time love interest of Scott Summers (Cyclops) and *X-Men: Apocalypse* shows the beginning of when these two meet.

### 9 Scott Summers/Cyclops

Scott Summers, known as Cyclops, emits red beams of concussive force through his eyes, destroying things around him. He starts out as a somewhat rebellious teen who is unable to control his power. Scott's older brother Alex brings him to Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters, and Hank develops a pair of protective glasses for him made with rose quartz lenses, allowing him to see. From his first run-in with Jean, Scott is smitten and the two quickly develop an interest in one another.

### 10 Kurt Wagner/Nightcrawler

Nightcrawler's powers give him the ability to teleport short distances (typically less than two miles) with the accompanying noise (typically described as "BAMF!"), along with a purple cloud and smell of sulfur left where he last stood. Originating from Germany, Nightcrawler hid his mutant powers in plain sight as the star attraction of the Munich Circus. His demonic-looking appearance – blue skin with yellow eyes and a long, pointed tail – made him an outcast well before his mutant powers fully manifested.

### 11 Angel / Archangel

Angel's mutation modified his body, endowing him with strong muscles, light, hollow bones and large feathered wings, allowing him to fly. After suffering severe damage to his wings, Angel is approached by Apocalypse and given the opportunity to channel his anger. In exchange for his allegiance, Apocalypse repairs Angel's wings by transforming them into a techno-organic metal – that also allows him to shoot deadly razor projectiles from his now seemingly indestructible wings.

### 12 Storm

As one of the most powerful mutants, Storm possesses the ability to control the weather over vast areas. She can control temperature, precipitation, humidity and moisture at a molecular level, generate lightning and other electromagnetic atmospheric phenomena. Storm can incite meteorological tempests such as tornadoes, blizzards and hurricanes. After Apocalypse comes to Storm's rescue, the young mutant is the first to join his mission to destroy the world and become one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

### 13 Psylocke

Psylocke is a fearless mutant telepath and a trained ninja assassin who is recruited to be one of the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse. In addition to her telepathy, she can extend her arms and create a glowing energy blade around her fist. She's also an expert in martial arts and swordsmanship – wielding a katana blade as a secondary weapon in addition to her mutant abilities.





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# X-TRA

ORDINARY MEN



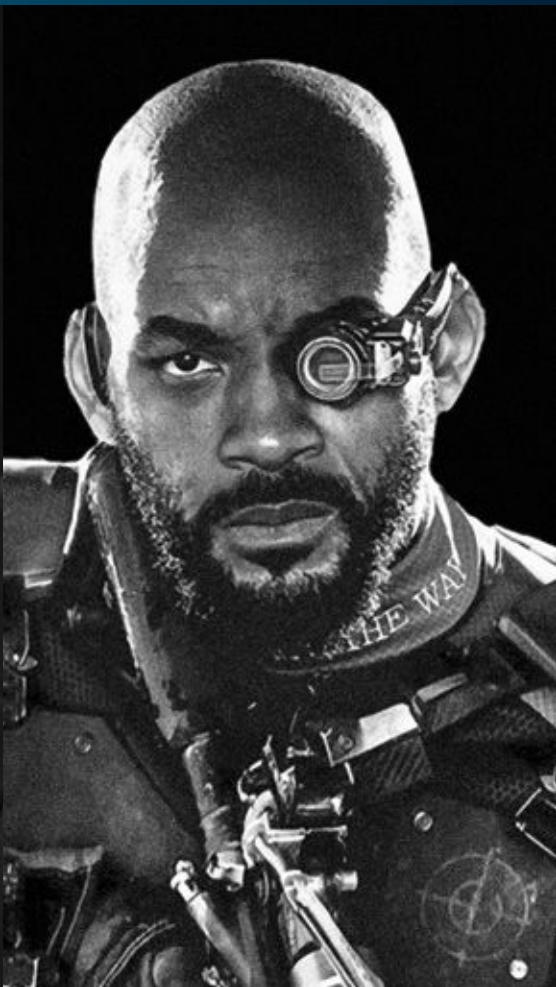




We'd like to introduce you to our  
dirty dozen of men who are certainly  
not average in any way

By Balvinder Sandhu

We're often spoilt for choice when it comes to leading men on the big screen. And even more so with manly men who portray strong men and superheroes perfectly. With a big pool to choose from, we've decided to narrow down to the hottest men over 35, for our dirty dozen of x-tra ordinary men.







## Tom Hiddleston, 35

He's best known for his role as Loki in the Thor and Avengers movies and we love that he's so different than the charming boy-next-door that we see in interviews – and is still able to win us over. He's currently seen in the TV series, *The Night Manager*, which once again shows how good an actor he really is.





## Chris Pratt, 36

He's the Star Lord in *Guardians of the Galaxy* and will be appearing in an Avengers movie soon too. While he might not be considered traditionally 'hunky' by many, his sense of humour and fun personality certainly charmed us, especially in his hilarious interviews. Plus, he was also excellent as the hero in *Jurassic World*. We also love his cute bromance with Captain America himself, Chris Evans, who, unfortunately, is too young to be on our list.





## James McAvoy, 37

He might not have the built of a superhero (sorry, James!) but he definitely has the looks and charisma to pull it off. He has portrayed the younger Professor Charles Xavier in three X-Men films now and being the brainy one certainly suits him. McAvoy is also perhaps a rather underrated actor, just watch him in movies such as *The Last King of Scotland* and *Filth* and you'll see that he's more than just a pretty face.





## Tom Hardy, 38

Hardy was excellent as the villain Bane in *The Dark Knight Rises* and his resume proves that that one performance was no fluke. He's brilliant in 'hard man' roles, such as in *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *The Revenant*. And, while his breakout role was *Inception*, we'll always remember him as Handsome Bob in Guy Ritchie's *Rocknrolla*. Who can forget the scene where he did a slow dance with Gerard Butler?





## Benedict Cumberbatch, 39

It looks like Cumberbatch will finally be known for a character other than Sherlock. While he has done many award-worthy performances, it's his role as the fictional British private detective that he's remembered for. He will be taking on Dr Strange, out in cinemas later this year, and we can hardly wait to catch it. Get ready, Cumberbitches!





## Ryan Reynolds, 39

He might have already been a popular actor before but *Deadpool* propelled Reynolds to the Hollywood stratosphere. And he was definitely the perfect actor to play the Marvel antihero, with his deadpan ways that first made him famous in the TV comedy series, *Two Guys And A Girl*, in the late 90s/early 2000s. He was also brilliant in the movie's hilarious marketing campaign, as he has the perfect personality and sense of humour to pull it off. It's just a shame his beautiful face is covered with the *Deadpool* costume...





## Michael Fassbender, 39

Fassbender's acting skills have been applauded by critics, for performances in movies such as *Shame*, *Steve Jobs* and *12 Years A Slave*, but he's in the unique position to have also been in superhero flicks. Best known to comic book fans as Magneto in the X-Men movies, the Irish actor is going to be even more popular in the next year or two, thanks to lead roles in *Assassin's Creed* and *Alien: Covenant*. While his role as Magneto brings out his dark side, with a painful past, we can't resist his million-watt smile when he isn't in that role.





## **Ben Affleck, 43**

There might have been many people who were disappointed with him being picked to be the new Caped Crusader but Affleck is used to criticism of his career and acting skills anyway so he probably found it easy to brush it all off. Whether you like it or not, he's the new Batman and will be for a while. We love how he bulked up for the role and would happily pay over and over again to see him in that sexy batsuit.





## Gerard Butler, 46

While he hasn't actually been in any kind of superhero movie, he *did* wear a cape in *300* – even if he didn't wear much else. And he has made a career out of playing badass characters, in movies such as *Gamer*, *Law Abiding Citizen*, *Olympus Has Fallen* and its recent sequel, *London Has Fallen*. He might not have those *300* abs anymore but as long as the Scottish actor keeps kicking bad guys' asses on screen, we'll keep watching him do it.





## **Hugh Jackman, 47**

Jackman will always be Wolverine to many of us not just because it was his breakout role, but also because he did (and still does!) it so well that we can't imagine anyone else playing that character. Besides, he could also be the only man in the world to actually manage to look sexy with 'mutton chops'. Then again, with such a gorgeous face and a body to match, we bet the Aussie actor would look good in anything...





## Will Smith, 47

Movie fans of a certain age will remember him best from *Men In Black* and the TV show *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* but Smith is about to appeal to an entirely new fanbase soon, thanks to his role in the upcoming *Suicide Squad*. He takes on the role of Deadshot, an antihero to Ben Affleck's Batman. He's also apparently making the third and fourth *Bad Boys* movies and, while he doesn't have a costume in that franchise, he's still one slick hero.





## **Robert Downey Jr, 51**

While Downey Jr probably thanks his lucky stars every day for the Iron Man role as it resuscitated his career, fans thank the powers that be too, as he's one of the best superhero castings ever, in our opinion. He brings the right amount of hotness and humour to the role and his chemistry with the rest of his Avengers cast is just part of what makes him such a great actor who's loved by critics and fans alike.







A black and white photograph of actor Dev Patel. He is wearing a light-colored suit jacket over a white collared shirt and a dark tie. He is looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

# COUNTING STARS

Star Dev Patel and director Matthew Brown talk  
*The Man Who Knew Infinity*

By Jedd Jong



**A film about a mathematician might be a hard sell, but writer-director Matthew Brown and star Dev Patel are out to convince audiences that *The Man Who Knew Infinity* is worth their time.**

The duo were in town to present the film at the 26th Singapore International Film Festival (SGIFF). The biopic tells the story of Srinivasa Ramanujan, the self-taught Indian mathematician whose revolutionary theories caught the attention of the international mathematical community. Ramanujan leaves his young wife Janaki and travels to England, where he is mentored by esteemed Cambridge professor G. H. Hardy, just as England is plunged into the First World War. Jeremy Irons co-stars as Hardy with Devika Bhise as Janaki. The cast also includes English actors Toby Jones, Jeremy Northam, Stephen Fry and Kevin McNally.

At the press conference at the ArtScience Museum in Singapore, Patel, having grown out his hair and sporting a beard, looked markedly different from how he appears in the film. He came across as laid-back and self-effacing, at one point attributing the success of his career to “extreme luck”. “It’s very rare that a man who looks like myself is gifted a film like this, especially in a period environment,” he mused. “It’s kind of the ultimate fish-out-of-water story,” Patel said of the film. Ramanujan is plucked from obscurity, transported from the middle of India to be taken under Hardy’s wing, facing a great deal of prejudice in the process. Patel describes Hardy as a “wonderful mentor” to Ramanujan but also “emotionally stunted” and “a father figure who can’t really emote and look after you.”

“My relationship with maths wasn’t the best, to be honest,” Patel admitted. His father was an accountant, and Patel said his maths grades were a let-down. “Hey, I’m playing Ramanujan, I’m doing alright!” he said to laughter and applause from the crowd. Patel assured us that audiences shouldn’t be intimidated by the lofty subject matter, saying of Ramanujan and Hardy, “You don’t really need to know what they’re talking about to see how passionate they are. They live and die for their art, which is mathematics.”



#### Capturing The Essence

Patel had his work cut out for him as there is no filmed footage of Ramanujan, so Patel was unable to study the way the mathematician spoke or walked. “We obviously look very different, but the idea is to capture the essence of the struggle of who he is,” Patel said, re-iterating the fish-out-of-water theme. He worked with a dialect coach and said the costumes helped him get into character to an extent. “[Ramanujan] was very uncomfortable wearing a suit and very uncomfortable wearing shoes – and my suit was very uncomfortable and my shoes were very uncomfortable,” Patel recounted.

Ramanujan is a towering figure in the realm of “abstract mathematics” and is known for drawing formulas from prayer and meditation. “His art represented his life and his religion and his views,” Patel explained. He added that Ramanujan was not only marginalised because of his race, but also because his theories were so radical and were initially difficult for some members of the mathematical community to swallow. Patel described Ramanujan’s religion as both his “blessing and his downfall”. While his spirituality allowed him to devise transcendent theories, it was also a hindrance to his survival, since the wartime rations were cooked in lard, which Ramanujan was prohibited from consuming under his faith.

Director Matthew Brown also professed to being terrible at maths in school, and joked

that he picked a mathematician as the subject of his feature film directing debut because he is a “glutton for punishment.” Brown concedes that the subject matter of abstract mathematics is “probably one of the reasons [*The Man Who Knew Infinity*] took ten years to get made,” but he considers it “a beautiful thing to view them as artists”, hoping that this perspective on Ramanujan and Hardy helps the audience relate to the film.

The film is based on the 1991 biography *The Man Who Knew Infinity: A Life of the Genius Ramanujan*, by Robert Kanigel. Brown credits Kanigel with “making the mathematics understandable on a philosophical level,” expressing that he tried to convey this in the film. Brown also tipped his hat to Japanese-American mathematician Ken Ono, who served as a consultant on the film. An expert in number theory who expanded upon Ramanujan’s Congruences, Ono coached Patel and Irons, ensuring the accuracy of the formulas depicted in the film.

According to Brown, Irons was a mentor both onscreen as Hardy and behind the scenes. Brown was grateful for Irons’ understanding of the production’s many constraints and helping to block for camera, something which prolific actors usually leave to stand-ins. “He’s the kind of guy that all the planets revolve around, he’s got his own gravitational pull which is astounding,” Patel marvelled. He admitted to being intimidated by Irons at times but was





also appreciative of the actor's generosity and attention to detail, saying he brought a great deal of experience to the set.

### From Cambridge To India

Among the challenges facing first-time director Brown were capturing an authentic sense of time and place given the constraints of an independent film. *The Man Who Knew Infinity* has the honour of being the first film granted permission by Trinity College, Cambridge, to film on the premises. "I think it was a tribute to the story," Brown said. Because of Ramanujan's monumental impact on mathematics and his legacy as a supremely illustrious alumnus of the institution, Cambridge was "incredibly supportive" of the endeavour. "We had a night where we were doing a scene and they had all the tents out in Wren Library and you could really feel the students that were laying there dying during the war; it was incredible," Brown recalled.

Patel exclaimed, "Cambridge is crazy!" He said with a laugh that he attended a school "that was like two steps away from actually having a metal detector," and stepping onto the historic campus greatly enhanced the feeling of being a fish-out-of-water that was integral to portraying Ramanujan. "I actually got in trouble for walking on the grass," Patel recalled, adding that he felt like he "was in Hogwarts" – he certainly wouldn't be the first to make that comparison. However, it wasn't all strolling the grounds being awestruck. Patel had to brave frigid temperatures and "mysterious objects floating in the water" for a scene in which Ramanujan is watching the university boat races and is pushed into the River Cam. "Students literally go drinking and take a pee in the river, and Matt's like, 'you've got to jump in there, man,'" Patel recalled, cringing.

Naturally, the film couldn't portray where Ramanujan ended up without depicting his origins, and Brown and the crew travelled to India where scenes were shot in Chennai and

Pondicherry, dressed to recreate Madras circa 1913. "We shot in some wonderful locations and it was just as immersive as Cambridge," Patel said of filming in India. "I've been to India a lot, but I've never been to the places we went to [on this film]." The production took great pains to accurately depict the Brahmin houses of the time.

The film has been described as a "mathematical bromance" between Ramanujan and Hardy, and perhaps a bromance was brewing behind the scenes between Patel and Brown, who had an easy rapport throughout the press conference. "I felt like we were in the trenches together and I really appreciate him as a human being who wears his heart on his sleeve," Patel said of his director. "We've grown together, we've laughed together and we've cried together, and it's because he's so passionate about this baby he gave birth to." A beat. "Now it sounds weird."

*The Man Who Knew Infinity* opens on 19 May 2016.



# QUADRILOGY, QUINTOLOGY, SEXTOLOGY & MORE:

## ASIA EDITION (PART 2)

By Jonathan Sung

While we welcome the ninth and latest instalment in the X-Men film series, *X-Men: Apocalypse* in the West, here in the East, we pick up where we left off last issue and continue our reveal of our next five memorable Hong Kong film franchises that not only deservedly hold a place in cinematic history but in many of our hearts as well.

From overnight millionaires, foolhardy police cadets and gambling masters to a legendary kungfu hero and charismatic triad leaders, let us take a stroll down memory lane and look back at some of these iconic film characters that certainly could hold their own against their Western counterparts when it comes to film franchises that stood the test of time and provided us with some of our fondest memories from the silver screen.





## ***It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World Franchise***

*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World* (富貴逼人) (1987)

*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World II* (富貴再逼人) (1988)

*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World III* (富貴再三逼人) (1989)

*It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World Too* (富貴黃金屋) (1992)

Ask any actor or actress and more likely than not they will tell you that, as much as they could try and plan and cultivate it, onscreen chemistry is often elusive and unpredictable, but when it happens, the result could be pure cinematic magic. Just look at Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. The two may have had a tumultuous marriage in reality, but audiences worldwide will always remember them for being the perfect onscreen comedian couple from *I Love Lucy* and to this day, they remain one of the most iconic screen couples in history since their collaboration back in 1951. Fast forward 36 years, and that same onscreen chemistry could be said to be shared between yet another onscreen partnership, this time in the Pearl of the Orient, between the now dearly departed comedians Bill Tung and Lydia Shum. The film was *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World* directed by Clifton Ko and was the Lunar New Year celebratory film in 1987.

Tung starred as news reporter 'Radar' Bill and Shum as his wife Mrs Piu, who with their three daughters Dai Dai (played by 1986 Miss Asia finalist and 'Miss Peace' subsidiary title winner Elsie Chan), Loi Dai (Loretta Lee) and Chiu Dai (Elsie Kwan) reside in the dilapidated public housing estates of Sun Chui Estate in Sha Tin. At first glance, the role of a typical Hong Kong dowdy housewife may seem pedestrian, but in the capable hands of Shum, she successfully makes the role her own, stealing the show as the hilariously domineering 'tigress' wife and Mum of three, who is obsessively addicted to mahjong as well as buying Mark Six lottery and dreams of the day when she and her family would strike it rich and flaunt their wealth and status to their lowly neighbours.



The brilliant onscreen chemistry between Shum and Tung was so memorably amazing that not only did they reunite for three successful sequels, they even reprised their roles in a memorable cameo appearance in the 1991 Hong Kong comedy film *The Banquet*. No mean feat standing out from the crowd, considering that the film, which was a passion project to fund a Hong Kong relief charity in aid of the Yangtze River flood in July that year, featured over 100 prominent guest stars.

Back to the storyline...in a nutshell, the film series follow the fortunes and misfortunes of Radar Bill and his family of five, as they experience the emotional highs and lows, often to comical results, of becoming overnight millionaires, then losing it all, regaining their riches again, with the cycle repeating several times over the course of the four films.

Just so you know how beloved this film franchise is, at the recently concluded 35th Hong Kong Film Awards, Elsie Kwan, now a 37-year-old Assistant Human Resources Manager at Hong Kong Tourism Board, who played the precocious 8-year-old daughter Chiu Dai back then, was specially invited to join the many other grown-up famous child stars on stage, as fellow stars and filmmakers in the audience brought the house down with applause, in a tribute to celebrate their brilliant performances on the silver screen, in spite of their tender ages back then.





## *The Inspector Wears Skirts* Franchise

*The Inspector Wears Skirts* (霸王花) (1988)

*The Inspector Wears Skirts II* (神勇飞虎霸王花) (1989)

*The Inspector Wears Skirts III* (皇家赌船) (1990)

*The Inspector Wears Skirts IV* (92 霸王花与霸王花) (1992)

If you were a kid growing up in the 1980s, more likely than not, you would probably remember and loved the Police Academy comedic film franchise.

Here in the East, we too had our own motley crew of bungling police officer cadets, in an all-female squad, who made their very first appearance in the 1988 comedic film *The Inspector Wears Skirts*, and later continued on with more misadventures in three sequels.

Produced by none other than our fave kungfu star of many cops-themed films and headlining star of the Police Story film franchise mentioned in our previous issue, Jackie Chan, the first film was a star-studded vehicle featuring Sibelle Hu, Kara Hui, Sandra Ng, Stanley Fung, Alex To, Michael Chow, Bill Tung, Ricky Hui of the Hui Brothers Trio, as well as yet another previously mentioned star in our last issue's film franchise article, Cynthia Rothrock of the In The Line of Duty film series.

The story starts off with an action-packed sequence, complete with wall-scaling chases and grenade explosions, choreographed by producer Chan himself, in which masked assassins infiltrate a film set and make an attempt on the life of a prominent Sheik, his wife and his personage, but are thwarted by Hu and Rothrock, our kickass female leads in the roles of Officer Wu and Law respectively. As a result of this successful rescue, Wu is thereafter granted approval by her boss played by familiar face Tung, coincidentally in a role reminiscent of his character from the Police Story film franchise, to assemble and train an all-female commando squad, the very first one in the history of the Hong Kong Police Force, to be deployed for similar security and hostage situations where a male team may be deemed unsuitable.

Enter new cadets: smart alecky, self-appointed high-achieving leader of the pack May (Hui), the standoffish but warm-hearted Jean (Ellen Chan), who is her rival for reformed playboy and frontman of the Flying Tiger squad Man (To)'s affections. Then there are ditsy vain pot Karen (Ann Bridgewater) and lovelorn naïveté Betty (Stephanie Lai) who unfortunately realised they were being two-timed by the cheating Peter/Ronald (Chow). Rounding up the bunch are chubby, boorish joker Amy (Ng) and loyal, dedicated but physically weak link of the group Ailene (Regina Kent). Together with the rest of their cadet mates, these newbies were shortlisted from thousands of policewomen as the elite team to undergo commando boot camp under the watchful eye of Wu and the exacting standards of Law. However, being the oddball bunch that they are, the training never fails to expose their inexperience and shortcomings, often to hilarious effect.

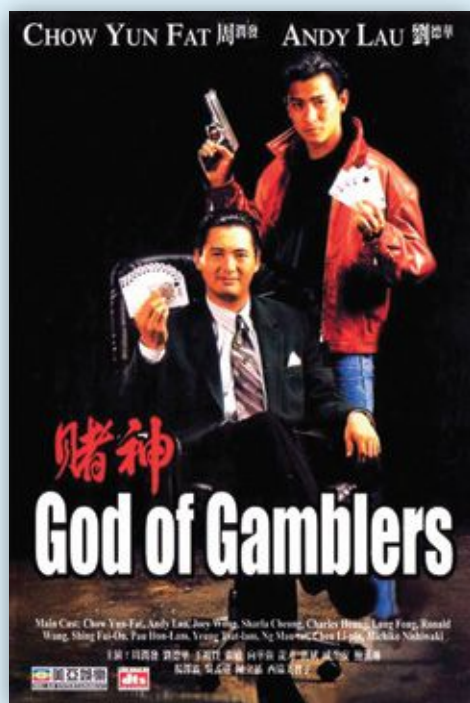
Against all odds, the girls eventually learn to set aside their personal differences to foster a strong and tight camaraderie that helped them through the competent completion of their training, even trouncing their male counterparts – the Flying Tiger Squad headed by Sir Kan (Fung) who secretly holds a torch for Wu – in a wrestling match. And in the first film's exciting finale, the girls put their skills and training to good use, masquerading as models, successfully pulling off a mission to secure and prevent the theft of The Star of Solomon and other gems worth countless millions, as well as apprehend the jewellery heist gang, headed by martial arts actor Jeff Falcon who comically sparred like a rabid cross between a feline and monkey when pitted against Rothrock and most of the female squad in the final fight showdown.

Following the first film, the three accompanying sequels basically followed the same formula, reuniting the original cast and introducing new squad members by the likes of Amy Yip, May Lo, Cynthia Khan and Moon Lee, following their rib-tickling shenanigans both in and out of the police academy.

Even though she has come a long way since then, slimmed down significantly and earned plenty of accolades for her later performances in *The Returning*, *Four Faces of Eve*, *Portland Street Blues*, the Golden Chicken trilogy and *Echoes of the Rainbow*, many still regard the Inspector Wears Skirts franchise to be the vehicle that introduced them to funny girl Sandra Ng, with the first film even earning her her very first nomination as Best Newcomer at the 8th Hong Kong Film Awards in 1989.







# The God of Gamblers Franchise

- God of Gamblers* (赌神) (1989)
- God of Gamblers II* (赌侠) (1990)
- All for the Winner* (赌圣) (1990)
- God of Gamblers III: Back to Shanghai* (赌侠2之上海滩赌圣) (1991)
- The Top Bet* (赌霸) (1991)
- God of Gamblers Returns* (赌神2) (1994)
- The Saint of Gamblers* (赌圣II 街头赌圣) (1996)
- God of Gamblers 3: The Early Stage* (赌神三之少年赌神) (1997)
- From Vegas to Macau* (赌城风云) (2014)
- From Vegas to Macau II* (赌城风云II) (2015)
- From Vegas to Macau III* (赌城风云III) (2016)



If *Star Wars* is the sci-fi film to rule all other sci-fi films in the history of cinema, then undeniably and unmistakably, *God of Gamblers* would be the equivalent of all gambling-themed films, especially since it was also the pioneer film that began it all.

Truth be told, the origins of how the very first *God of Gamblers* film was conceptualised is a rather surprising and amusing story. Back then, director Wong Jing, often regarded by many as prolific and controversial as well as king of cheesy & exploitative flicks, had read a short story featuring a character with the title of 'God of Gambler'. Although he thought the story was crap, he loved the character's nickname so much so that he actually created and wrote an entire brand new screenplay inspired by that moniker and believe it or not, that was how the first film of this franchise was written.

Topping the Hong Kong box office back in 1989 by raking in a whopping HK\$37 million, the first film resurrected the gambling genre first created for the goggle box in the 1980s with TVB drama serial *The Shell Game*, coincidentally also written by Wong, successfully transposing the genre onto the silver screen and thereafter setting in motion a massive tidal wave of gambling-themed films and TV series, such as ATV's *Who's The Winner* quadrilogy series, *The Shell Game*'s spin-off series *King of Gambler* and even locally with our very own *The Unbeatables* trilogy series, to follow in its footsteps.

Honestly, it's easy to see why this film franchise succeeded. Practically every film in this franchise, from the original to the sequels and the spin-offs, struck the perfect balance of adrenaline-pumping action, impressive special effects, poignant heartfelt moments and hysterical humour.

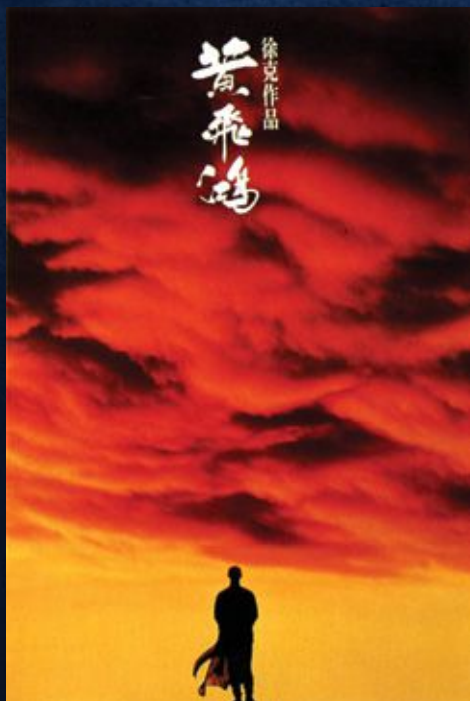
And just like most successful film franchises, the *God of Gambler* franchise definitely has its fair share of many memorable characters created throughout the course of the film series too. Besides the titular character, Ko Chun, played to perfection by Chow Yun Fat, who just as well may be regarded as the God of Acting, there are also his capable apprentices – Little Knife, the Knight of Gamblers and Seng, the Saint of Gamblers, hilariously portrayed by Heavenly King Andy Lau and King of Nonsensical Slapstick Comedy Stephen Chow.

Not forgetting their comical sidekicks of course, who could ever forget Ng Man Tat as the infamous Third Uncle who never failed to go into ridiculously funny epileptic fits whenever the Saint of Gamblers Seng or his sister Mui, played by Anita Mui, called him by his title of San Suk? Or Carol Cheng as Yau Hei, the Queen of Gamblers who in truth is merely a grifter, who comically found herself in big trouble when forced by circumstance to face-off against the Saint of Gamblers Seng's adversary in his place. Deserving a mention as well is Charles Heung as Dragon Five, the diehard loyalist who fearlessly protected and served Ko and his apprentices. Sharla Cheung and Gong Li were also notable as the lady loves of our gambling heroes, providing a much appreciated touch of sentiment to the films.

The story premise of most of the films may be simple, usually with the *God of Gamblers* or his apprentices being dealt gambling showdown ultimatums, often wagering their lives, and how eventually with their wits and skills as well as a little help from their friends, some of whom possess special superhuman powers, end up outsmarting the villains and winning the day.

Even though the film franchise seemed to slowly fade into oblivion in the late 1990s, fans were thrilled when under the direction of Wong again, the franchise resurrected itself in 2014 with a reboot and Chow taking on his iconic role again in the new trilogy of *From Vegas to Macau*.





## The Once Upon A Time In China Franchise

*Once Upon a Time in China* (黄飞鸿) (1991)

*Once Upon a Time in China II* (黄飞鸿之二:男儿当自强) (1992)

*Once Upon a Time in China III* (黄飞鸿之三:狮王争霸) (1993)

*Once Upon a Time in China IV* (黄飞鸿之四:王者之风) (1993)

*Once Upon a Time in China V* (黄飞鸿之五:龙城歼霸) (1994)

*Once Upon a Time in China and America* (黄飞鸿之西域雄狮) (1997)

Before there was Donnie Yen and Ip Man, there was Jet Li and Wong Fei Hung.

Since the 2008 autobiographical martial arts film *Ip Man* sky-rocketed the then relatively unfamiliar and struggling action artist Donnie Yen to overnight cinematic success and stardom, the former multiple-time world wushu tournament champion and 28th Hong Kong Film Awards Best Actor nominee has been synonymous with the title of 'legendary kungfu movie hero' in the eyes of many. However, turn back the clock slightly more than two decades ago and that opinion would have greatly differed.

Yes, before there were the rapid fists of fury made famous onscreen by Yen, another kungfu hero dominated our silver screens back in the 1990s. His name was Wong Fei Hung and he was brought vividly to life on the big screen in 1991 by a fresh-faced ex-Beijing Wushu Team national champion, who had just got his big break from his role in the 1982 film, *Shaolin Temple* – Jet Li.

In an entirely fresh new take, director Tsui Hark turned the whole real-life story on its head and hippped up the film, making it more relatable to younger audiences at the time, by reinventing the titular character as a suave and virile young man, instead of the wise, old master as per its previous famed film incarnation starring Kwan Tak Heng. Tsui also re-introduced Thirteenth Aunt as a love interest, in the form of the demure but alluring Rosamund Kwan. The role was later revered as one of most classic female characters in cinematic history. Besides Li and Kwan, the film series also boasted a stellar supporting cast. Yuen Biao, Kent Cheng, Yuen Kum Fai and Heavenly King Jacky Cheung stood their own and shone in their respective characters of Wong Fei Hung's four prized disciples, Leung Foon, Porky Weng, Kai and Bucktooth So. In fact, as the stuttering in Cantonese but fluent in English bucktoothed comic relief of the film, Cheung impressed so much that he earned a nomination as Best Supporting Actor at the 11th Hong Kong Film Awards that year.

Besides Cheung, the first film also garnered nominations for Best Film, Best Cinematographer and Best Art Direction, as well as won Best Film Editing, Best Action Choreography, Best Director for Tsui and Best Film Music for the rousing signature music theme, inspired by the Ming Dynasty folk song 'Under the General's Orders', composed by the recently departed James Wong that has now become the representative tune of legendary hero Wong Fei Hung. The just as memorable song version of the music theme was performed aptly by two male icons of machismo – George Lam in Cantonese and Jackie Chan in Mandarin, and won for Wong the Best Original Song Award at the 29th Golden Horse Film Awards in 1992 for the second film in the series. At that same awards ceremony held in Taiwan, the second film also earned nominations for Best Actor for Li, Best Supporting Actor for Max Mok and Best Action Choreography for Yuen Woo Ping. Despite that loss, Yuen would then go on to win Best Action Choreography at the 12th Hong Kong Film Awards that same year.

Storyline-wise, in summary, the film series mostly focused on the theme of Chinese nationalism, depicting, through the characters of Wong Fei Hung and his entourage, how Western imperialism adversely affected China during the late Qing Dynasty and the evolution of the common folks from vehement rejection to eventual acceptance of Western cultures, as the country advanced into the modern era.

Even though he may have since made the move over to Hollywood and attained international stardom with his remarkable martial prowess in films like *Lethal Weapon 4* and *The Expendables* trilogy, and has been replaced by Vincent Zhao in the latter films in this franchise, as well as Eddie Peng in the latest 2014 reboot of the film, *Rise of the Legend*, but to the many kungfu film aficionados out there, nobody could ever replace Li as the undisputed cinematic representation of Wong Fei Hung in our hearts.







# The Young and Dangerous Franchise

*Young and Dangerous* (古惑仔之人在江湖) (1995)

*Young and Dangerous 2* (古惑仔2之猛龙过江) (1996)

*Young and Dangerous 3* (古惑仔3之只手遮天) (1996)

*Once Upon a Time in Triad Society* (旺角揸FIT人) (1996)

*Once Upon a Time in Triad Society 2* (旺角揸FIT人2) (1996)

*Young and Dangerous 4* (97古惑仔战无不胜) (1997)

*Young and Dangerous 5* (98古惑仔龙争虎斗) (1998)

*Portland Street Blues* (古惑仔情义篇：洪兴十三妹) (1998)

*Young and Dangerous: The Prequel* (新古惑仔之少年激斗篇) (1998)

*The Legendary 'Tai Fei'* (古惑仔激情篇：洪兴大飞哥) (1999)

*Born To Be King* (胜者为王) (2000)

*Those Were The Days...* (友情岁月：山鸡故事) (2000)

*Young and Dangerous: Reloaded* (古惑仔之江湖新秩序) (2013)



Western counterpart, by having bragging rights of several prestigious acting category award wins, including Best Actress (Sandra Ng) and Best Supporting Actress (Shu Qi) for *Portland Street Blues*, as well as Best New Performer (Nicholas Tse) for *Young and Dangerous: The Prequel* at the 18th Hong Kong Film Awards.

At the start, just like the Marvel Cinematic Universe franchise, many fans of the Ngau Lo authored Teddy Boy comic series that the Young and Dangerous franchise was adapted from questioned if they would do justice to their much loved comic characters when they made the transition from comic to film. Their fears would eventually be unfounded as under the capable direction of Andrew Lau (best known now for his *Infernal Affairs* trilogy and *Initial D* films as well), the masterful scriptwriting of Manfred Wong and the charismatic cast, the adaptation was so flawless, it was as if every character from the comic series literally walked off the pages onto the silver screen.

As the core four central characters of the series, Ekin Cheng, Jordan Chan, Michael Tse and Jerry Lam were so successful in their portrayal of the Hung Heng blood brothers Chan Ho Nam, 'Mountain Chicken' Chiu San Hor, 'Big Day Two' Leung Yee and 'Foreskin' Pau Tat Yee, that the band of brothers even managed to ingeniously carve an extended career out of it with the formation of a man band. Yes, we kid you not. Nearly 20 years after they first shot to fame with the first Young and Dangerous film in 1995, the four charismatic male leads, now all in their forties, held their very first reunion concert over four completely sold out nights at the Hong Kong Coliseum in November 2013. The fearless foursome then toured the United States, stopped over at Singapore to perform at Resorts World Sentosa on New Year's Eve 2014 and will be heading over the Causeway in July this year for yet another musical performance at the Genting Arena of Stars.

If there is ever to be a showdown of the film franchises between the East and the West, the Young and Dangerous franchise might actually be the closest one to rival that of the Marvel Cinematic Universe franchise, and believe it or not, the two franchises even share a few things in common! For starters, both film franchises are adapted from extremely successful comic book series. The two also impressively top the list both in the East and the West respectively for having the most number of films in a franchise so far. But the Young and Dangerous franchise may have slightly edged out its

While the six main films of the series created overnight stardom for Cheng and his reel triad brothers, the mark of a truly successful film franchise is when every film character is strong enough to stand on its own, so much so that they could shine on their own merits when made to helm their own standalone film, branched out or spun off from the skeletal film series, just as the Marvel, DC and X-Men film franchises have proven to do so. And indeed, the Young and Dangerous franchise has accomplished that and more, with its characters 'Mountain Chicken', 'Handsomeness Kwan' (Francis Ng) and 'Thirteenth Sister' (Sandra Ng), each proving they had the chops to carry off their roles to great success in their respective spin-off films, with Ng even bringing home an award for her performance.

As with every successful film franchise both in the East and West, a reboot to rejuvenate the series was attempted in 2013, featuring the young and hunky Him Law, Sammy Sum, Oscar Leung, Dominic Ho, Jazz Lam, Paul Wong and Philip Ng. Only time will tell if that will be a boon or bane to the success of this iconic franchise.



# BRAN NEW DAY

Isaac Hempstead Wright tells F\*\*\* about growing up on the set of *Game of Thrones*

Jedd Jong

Isaac Hempstead Wright, known to legions of *Game of Thrones* fans as Bran Stark, was in Singapore to promote the sixth season of HBO's juggernaut fantasy epic.

Bran is the fourth child of Eddard and Catelyn Stark, who was crippled when Jaime Lannister pushed him out of a tower window after Bran caught Jaime having sex with Jaime's twin sister Cersei. Bran later learns he is a 'warg', someone who can send his consciousness into and temporarily control other beings. In Season 4, Bran set out on an epic quest in search of the fabled three-eyed raven which appears in his dreams, accompanied by Hodor, Jojen and Meera. The character sat out Season 5, but is back for Season 6.

The young English actor spent his first day in the country meeting fans at HBO Asia's *Game of Thrones* Experience: Worlds of Westeros at Ion Orchard. Fans surprised him with a birthday song ahead of his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Hempstead Wright met with journalists at the Grand Hyatt Hotel a few days later. The actor came off as attentive and thoughtful with a keen sense of humour, intent on keeping a good head on his shoulders. Hempstead Wright has said in earlier interviews that he plans to stay in school and pursue a university education with the goal of attaining a PhD. Hempstead Wright spoke about how his journey as an actor has paralleled that of his character's, revealed how the show's writers mess with the cast and admitted to often worrying that Bran would suddenly be killed off. Oh, spoilers for the show up until the end of Season 5 will abound in this interview!





**What are some of the most unique experiences you've had on location?**

The *Game of Thrones* location department certainly takes you to some fairly extraordinary places around the world. Sadly – well, not sadly – a lot of my stuff tends to be in Belfast, which is beautiful, but the weather always tries to make it quite difficult to enjoy it. [laughs] The forests of Belfast, you wouldn't think it, but around Northern Ireland there are some stunning little rivers and mountains. In Season 1, I remember the Direwolf pups – Tollymore forest, it was the most idyllic, stunning forest I've ever seen. The beheading scene was particularly freezing cold. I remember a lot of people commenting on the internet saying, "Wow, Sean Bean looks really cold! Great actor!"

**Do you have any favourite *Game of Thrones* fan theories?**

Ah, I really like the one about Meera Reed and Jon Snow, that they're actually brother and

sister. I think that's a really cool one. I haven't managed to get anything out of George R. R. Martin on that one.

**What's your view on Jon Snow's apparent death last season?**

It's pretty shocking! I mean, they kill everyone, don't they! Nobody really wanted him to die. [laughs] Again, that's kind of what makes *Game of Thrones* different from everything else, it really isn't afraid to murder the characters that everyone loves, characters that are pretty much the only reason people tune in for, so don't get too attached. [laughs]

**In the trailer for Season 6, we see Bran standing alongside the White Walkers. Will Bran be able to walk again this season?**

When they released the picture, they said underneath, 'this is Bran in a vision', and I don't think anybody saw that. That in particular could well be a vision, in that sort of vein, there are very cool visions involving Bran this season.

**What has it been like acting in *Game of Thrones* since the age of 11?**

It's been sort of surreal. When I started, when I was so young, about ten-ish, when you're that age, you just kind of take what you're thrown. You never really pause for thought about the totally absurd nature of the whole thing. [laughs] And the fact that here I was, ten, getting to travel all around the place and getting to act in this fantastic TV show, it never really dawned on me. It was all like, "yeah, yeah, I've got to go off to Belfast again this summer, see all these friends and hang out in Belfast." As it's gone on, when all my friends are starting to plan what they want to do for the rest of their lives and there I am getting to experience all these incredible things, it's mad but I'm very lucky. I've enjoyed every second of the crazy journey it's been.

**You're growing with the series and fans are also watching you grow with the series. What is one thing you've learned as Bran Stark?**





I think Bran Stark is one of these characters – [like] pretty much all the characters in *Game of Thrones* – who faces extreme hardship. He always wanted to be a knight and then he's chucked out a window and he's paralysed, then his family are all murdered, and his home is burnt down, and he's taken to this really dangerous part of the North with these two people he's only just met, and he has to send his brother away... [chuckles] One particular thing that summed it up was when he was at Craster's Keep and there with Jon Snow, his half-brother and somebody he's always been very close with, he had the opportunity to meet up again and to take the easy route out, and just not follow this mystical calling which has been pulling him all the way to the North. For Bran, he's a symbol of really struggling through hardship and not taking anything for granted, because nothing's been easy for him, there's never been a moment where he could just relax.

I think one of the other overriding themes is the fact that he could've at so many points just stayed where he was or not followed this feeling he had, and I suppose that's a sort of metaphor for really just pursuing exactly what you think so should.

**What is the camaraderie like on set between the Stark kids? Is there the feeling that "it's us against the cruel, cruel world"?**

[laughs] We have a real good laugh on set. The thing is, the Stark kids, since we're now [in] far-flung parts of the Westeros map, on set we never meet each other. But off set, we're all pretty good friends and there's a really great sense of camaraderie on the *Game of Thrones* set, whether it's just off set and you're hanging out with everyone, or on set with the crew. The crew are really fantastic and really lovely, whenever the camera's not rolling, I'm always chatting with prop guys or the sound guys. It's a very professional set, but equally, it's a very friendly set. There's no messing about or anything, but equally, there's a very, very nice atmosphere. We get on very well; one of my best friends ever is

Dean Charles Chapman, who plays Tommen Baratheon, whom I met on *Thrones*.

**Is there anyone who's a practical joker on set?**

The biggest practical jokers are actually our writers, David [Benioff] and Dan [Weiss]. They'll often send people scripts which had been rewritten slightly, specifically for them. Alfie Allen, who plays Theon Greyjoy, around the time of Season 2 where he took over Winterfell, they sent him a script where I jumped out and sort of stabbed him in the back over and over again. [chuckles] I got this text from Alfie saying, "Oh my god, I just read the new script! You stab me to death, that's amazing!" I went, "I'm not sure what..." [laughs]

I think they did one with Kit, who played Jon Snow, where they burned his beautiful face and he had to wear a mask for the rest of the season. [laughs] Touch wood [knocks on table] but as of yet, they haven't sent me a script [like that].

**In an early interview, you said you were too young to read the books. Have you read them yet?**

I haven't, I'm ashamed to say. Well, we've reached the point where a lot of the season is off-book, because we've kind of reached the end of them. Right now, I don't know whether it's the right time to read the books. I think it would be really nice, once the whole series is done, to go through the books and compare how it's all been slightly altered and different.

**Which one of the *Game of Thrones* characters, other than Bran, do you like the most?**

Oh, I do love Tyrion [chuckles], you've got to love Tyrion. He's funny and smart, which is something I think often gets pushed aside in Westeros in favour of getting stabbed. It's refreshing to have a character there who's holding on and keeping his wits throughout the particularly dark elements of the show.

**Were there any points in the filming of the show where you thought to yourself, "I would do this differently as Isaac from how Bran goes about this"?**

I think there have been a couple of moments throughout the series where Bran's hubris has kind of gotten the better of him and he's made an impulsive decision without really thinking about it. One that springs to mind in particular, back in Season 2, I can't remember which guards they were but basically as a distraction, they were in a fight somewhere near Winterfell and Bran sends all the troops to them to deal with that. Meanwhile, Theon can then take over Winterfell.

Actually, I think I would've done the same. Bran and I are both growing up together; at the same time, we both kind of learn what you do and what you don't do – a lot about honour and responsibility. That's something else Bran has taught me, a very severe sense of responsibility about your actions and their greater implications. I think I related to a lot of Bran's decisions more than I would like to.

**If you could warg into any animal, what would it be?**

I'd love to be able to fly, so I think a bird would be a good one. If dragons were real, I would do that, sadly not. I think I'd be like an eagle or something.

**What about a human being?**

Would be cool to be the president of the United States. I wouldn't complain if I were Obama. I don't know, it's a power trip thing. [laughs] Maybe a racing driver, that could be fun for a day.

**Can we expect to see Bran controlling the dragons?**

Don't know. [laughs]

**You don't know, or you can't tell us?**

I genuinely don't know.

**What is George R. R. Martin like?**

He's a lovely, lovely guy. I haven't seen him on set as much, he doesn't really tend to be on set because he's finishing all the books, but you always meet him at the events. The books are his babies really, he's had to sort of give up a lot of creative control and let David and Dan change them, because they're such vast, deep volumes that a lot of it wouldn't be feasible to translate to TV. George has been so good at letting the show become the show and keeping the books [as] the books. Above that, he's a genuinely nice guy. He's never been uppity or claimed to be the next Tolkein or whatever, but I think we can safely say he is.

**Is there a wager amongst the cast at the beginning of every season to see who will get killed off?**

I think we should start a sweepstakes! The first



thing anyone does when they get the script is [mimes flipping through the script] “forget the story, am I alive?” They always say, it’s kind of like the mafia. You get a nice bottle of champagne, a box of chocolates or a bouquet of flowers before you get the script. David and Dan will send a really nice present, they’ll take you out to dinner, and then you get the script. You always get a phone call, first of all. Season 5, when I wasn’t going to be in it, I got a call from my agent in the morning saying “David and Dan want to speak to you.” So I went to school the whole day, going, “Oh no, I’m dying!” They called me at the end of the day and I was waiting for the bad news. When they said, “No, you’re just going to sit out this season” I went, “Oh, that’s fine!”

### **Who would you like to see on the throne at the end of the series?**

I’d quite like to see Sansa on the throne. She’s another character who’s really had to put up with some horrendous things, but she’s really had to learn the way of the diplomat and she’s been exposed to the politics of Westeros in a way that maybe the other characters haven’t. I think she’s be primed to balance the politics and wars going on in the region particularly well. I reckon she’d be a particularly good queen – nicer than Cersei!

### **Of all the terrible fates that have befallen various characters, which made you wince the hardest?**

The worst for me was definitely Oberyn’s death, because I didn’t have a clue that was coming. That was in Season 5, and I’d been away for that year, I hadn’t got any of the scripts and didn’t have a clue what was going on. I was watching that [Oberyn’s story] going, “Yes! The good guy’s triumphing for once!” and then he had his brain squished. That was a horrific death, that was awful.

### **If Bran had to be killed off, how would you like to go?**

I’d love a really gruesome death. Then you get all the cool prosthetics. [laughs] You get a decapitated head which you can then take home. It would be quite hard to top all the deaths [we’ve already seen]. I don’t know how they keep coming up with them, they get more and more inventive by the season. I don’t know how they could top it without just going over-the-top disgusting. I’d leave it to David and Dan, but I’ll say, “Give us something fun”.

### **Are you thinking of pursuing acting professionally after *Game of Thrones* concludes?**

Yeah, I think so. Like a lot of my peer group at school, we kind of change what we’ve decided our jobs to be every five minutes. I wanted to be a neurosurgeon, then a physicist, all sorts, a banker. The one constant throughout that has been acting and having enjoyed that consistently, it’s too much fun to not do.

### **What ongoing TV series would you like to be**

### **a part of if you weren’t in *Game of Thrones*?**

One I just watched the other day, which I really love, was *Bojack Horseman*. I thought it was really funny and really clever. I remember looking at it every time it was on Netflix going, “Ehy is the man a horse?” Actually, it’s genius! I’d love to be in that.

### **What is your defence or argument when you hear someone say that children shouldn’t be acting in a show like *Game of Thrones*?**

I think what it’s actually done, at least for me, is it’s debunked a lot of the violence that you see in TV shows. What’s more damaging is if you have lots of kids...it’s so easy to watch very, very violent TV shows through the internet now. There’s no stopping someone just illegally downloading *Game of Thrones* or whatever. That’s the danger of it, all these kids watch horribly violent shows and it scars them.

But for me, being on set and playing with these decapitated heads and seeing all the blood lying around and knowing that it’s all completely made up, then when you see something that’s violent in another film or TV show, you know just behind it there’s somebody pumping blood through the dead body. So it’s been “healthy” [makes scare quotes gesture] to see the side of it which proves it’s just made up.

### **With Bran rediscovering his powers, what do you think his larger role in the coming season will be?**

I personally think Bran will be quite crucial in assisting someone in their quest for Westeros. I don’t think Bran will ever be the one who charges and takes the throne himself, but I think his powers have extraordinary enabling capabilities for others to act, a magical bodyguard as it were. I have no idea what he’s going to do, but I suspect he’s the one who really has the capability to cause an earthquake in Westeros.

### **What is it like acting on a show where you’re never quite sure what’s going to happen?**

What’s interesting about Bran is that he might know what’s going to happen, because of his powers. Particularly this season, it feels like he’s almost read the script. He knows what’s going on all around the world. This year I kind of approached it as though Bran knew everything, as if he’d just watched the show the whole time.

### **Have any of the older actors given you any advice?**

I think in general, you kind of just do what you do and you don’t interfere or touch other people’s work, it’s quite nice. But equally, having been around such fantastic actors, you can’t

help but learn from them. In particular, this year, Max von Sydow, he’s a really frail, elderly 87-year-old gentleman and he still conducts himself with such professionalism. Despite the fact that he’s one of the greatest film actors of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, he conducts himself so nicely on set, he’s so friendly. He doesn’t fuss about all the ridiculous places he’s being pushed on set. His voice, I don’t think that’s something I could really replicate. He would say lines that are exposition and not necessarily something that’s a massively powerful sentiment, but he’ll speak them and you’ll think, “This is the most important piece of information I’ve ever been told”.

### **Has it been easy to live a normal existence with the fame that being on *Game of Thrones* brings?**

For me, I’ve always kept a relatively normal existence, really. I still go to school, a normal school, and I live in a very rural part of the



countryside in England, the people there are quite elderly, so they’re not typical *Game of Thrones* watchers. As it’s gone on, it’s been noticeable, but I’ve never been uncomfortable with it. It’s always really cool when someone comes up to you and says they love the show you’re in and asks to take a photo or whatever, that’s a pretty nice feeling. What’s kind of weird is you’ll walk into a restaurant and people will try to place you, you’ll get all these strange stares.

### **What are some of your interests off set?**

I’m a musician; I play piano, music is really my other passion, that’s what I love. Everything from classical music, which I play, rock, which I like to listen to.

### **Have you had a chance to speak to or meet with Ramin Djawadi, the composer on the show?**

Yes, I did! I got to go to his studio in Santa Monica and he showed me around and showed me some of the music he was scoring for *Thrones*, and that was just the coolest thing. He’s the friendliest, sweetest gentleman who composes the most fantastic music, that was a real honour. In New York, for the premiere of Season 4, we had the New York Philharmonic play the *Game of Thrones* theme tune, so I got to sit in on the rehearsal with Ramin and the orchestra. That was one of the most moving experiences of my life, being in this small space with this amazing symphony orchestra playing that piece.



# WOMAN OF STEEL

Melissa Benoist dishes the dirt on playing the iconic superhero in *Supergirl*







**In the vast DC Comics Universe of superheroes, the rich mythology of Superman, the planet Krypton and the House of El is perhaps the most famous and instantly recognisable.**

Enter Supergirl (Melissa Benoist)! Born Kara Zor-El on the doomed planet Krypton, the pre-teen Kara escaped at the same time as the infant Kal-El, but didn't arrive on Earth until many years later after being lost in the Phantom Zone. Protected and raised by her adopted family, the Danvers, Kara grew up in the shadow of her foster sister, Alex, and learned to hide the phenomenal powers she shares with her famous cousin.

Years later, at age 24, living in National City and working as an assistant for Catco Worldwide Media mogul Cat Grant (Calista Flockhart), Kara has spent so many years trying to fit in that she forgot to ever stand out. All that changes when she decides to embrace her superhuman abilities and become the hero she was always destined to be. With the help of Daily Planet photographer James Olsen, her bioengineer sister Alex, and the research of the super-secret, off-the-grid Department of Extra-Normal Operations (DEO) and its head Hank Henshaw, who are tasked with keeping the Earth safe from aliens, Kara takes to the skies to protect her world. Her foes include both a sinister extraterrestrial menace and the high-tech terrestrial threat of clever villains with powerful weaponry.

Produced by Berlanti Productions (*Arrow*, *The Flash*, *Pan*), this hourly episode is an epic action-adventure for the entire family. Combining the heart, humour and spectacle of a superhero series, with the week-to-week intrigue of the DEO's investigations, Kara's childhood memories of her time on Krypton and the sophisticated workplace dramedy of her secret identity at Catco, *Supergirl* is charged with true epic storytelling -- bringing a strong female hero to television screens at long last.



#### **How does it feel to tackle an iconic role like Supergirl?**

I knew this role was going to be a challenge and a lot of responsibility, but I love a good challenge. It's a dream come true to play a character like Supergirl. I love that the show is hopefully going to spread a lot of hope and positivity in the world. I hope the character is a good influence on the world.

#### **What excites you the most about the character?**

What I love about Kara is that she's still in this process of discovering herself. I look at this as a coming-of-age story. I love it when she finds her strength and when she owns it. Those are my favourite parts to play; when she has no fear.

#### **How much of Kara's personal life will we see in the show?**

We're definitely going to see a lot of Kara's personal life. [*Supergirl* executive producer] Ali Adler always says, "If you take away the fact that she fights aliens, what would this girl be like? What would her life look like?" We're definitely going to discover that. She's got a lot of complicated relationships to explore, including her career and private life. She's juggling a lot of things.

#### **Are you as kick-ass as Supergirl?**

I try to be. It's funny because in my everyday life I have always been such a pacifist. I grew up in a household full of women and if you hit someone it was a huge deal, even just a slap. The butt kicking is new to me. That's a new muscle I'm flexing, but I'd be lying if I didn't say I liked it.

#### **What physical training did you have to undertake in order to prepare for the role of a superhero?**

I've had to train quite a bit. I've been training since before the pilot and I definitely had to learn new techniques along the way. I had to learn how to not hurt yourself more than the person you're punching, so boxing was part of the training. I also did a lot of core work, as well as biometric workouts.

#### **How exhausting is the role of Supergirl?**

It's extremely physical, so it's challenging and it's tiring – but that's a good thing. I think she's got to be really, really tough and strong to show girls – and everyone else – that you can overcome the things that you're afraid of.

#### **How much did the physical preparation change your mindset?**

The motivation definitely affects my mindset



because I don't have a choice in the matter. I can't sit down and think, 'I'm done. I want some popcorn!' I have to stay on top of my game.

**How tough is the wirework for the flying scenes?**

It's hard. The wirework is really difficult, but it's so fun when you get it right. Watching the results is exhilarating. It's a really, really cool feeling to see them, especially knowing the energy that I had to exert to create those flying scenes. The way they look is really rewarding.

**How did it feel to put on the Supergirl suit for the first time?**

The first time I put it on, I felt like I was on top of the world. It's impossible not to feel this internal shift of strength and bravery. Wearing the suit makes me feel very brave. When I put on the suit, there's a transformation almost to the point where I don't recognise myself when I'm in it. I feel like a different person.

**On a practical level, what do you love about the costume? And what do you dislike about it?**

That's a really good question. I grew up as a dancer, so it feels like the leotard and tights that I wore when I was a ballerina. I think I'm very lucky in terms of my suit. I know a lot of people have masks that don't breathe at all and make them sweat, but I don't have that problem. What's impractical is the fact that mine has a corset, which is sometimes a pain – but it's fine.

**When it comes to the flying scenes, are you trying to bring some of the grace from your dancing background to the movement of Supergirl?**

Oh, of course. I think it's cool to try and bring a sense of femininity to her strength. When you look at Superman, he's obviously a very solid character – but I like the idea of bringing a sense of fluidity to Supergirl. I like the idea of adding femininity to the role.

**How many of the stunts are you allowed to tackle?**

I've been trying to do a lot of stunts, because I want to. I think they are really fun. There are some days when I can't do them, but I'm trying to do as many as possible. My stunt double is amazing. She was Jennifer Garner's stunt double on *Alias* and she was also on *Buffy*, so she's been all over the place. She's very cool. I wish people could see what she has to go through. It's insane.

**Would you agree that Supergirl is a story about identity and being okay with your power as a woman?**

That's very true, and that's something that I'm also going through right now. I don't think you're ever done learning about yourself, especially as a woman. We are complicated, multi-faceted creatures. We are flawed and that's one thing that I love about Kara. She is constantly messing up and she's flying by the seat of her pants half the time. With what we've



done so far, I love that there's room to grow and it shows that no one has it all figured out, no matter how many powers you have.

**Which comic books did you enjoy reading the most during your research for the show? And what did you learn?**

I read a lot of *The New 52* when I was researching the character. From what I gather, I think she has this lovely naïveté and I love that she has a knowledge of where she comes from – but I think her history is so sad. Kal-El [aka Superman] had no idea what his planet or his parents were like, but Kara has a really clear idea of where she grew up and her family. I think that's a really beautiful and sad story that really informs who she is.

**How does it feel to portray a character who is loved by so many comic book and movie fans?**

It's a daunting feeling to work on a character that's already been developed and that so many people already love. It's a huge responsibility. I love her humanity, even though she is an alien. I love that she really has a lot of discovering to do, as well as a lot of growth. I love that she makes mistakes. I think she's really relatable and I really want to stay true to that.

**How much did you enjoy comic books when you were growing up?**

I was into movies more than comic books. To be honest, I wasn't much of a comic book reader until I started college. My closest friend is a huge comic book reader. He loved graphic novels, so I read lots of them then. I loved Michael Keaton as Batman, though. I grew up on those movies and I have always been a fan of sci-fi in general.

**Which superhero television shows did you rate?**

Personally, I liked *Lois & Clark*. I always thought that show was cool.

**And now, Dean Cain – the man who portrayed Superman in *Lois & Clark* – is playing your father in *Supergirl*...**

I know! It's crazy, but it's very cool. He is such a nice guy, too. I couldn't be more blessed.

Catch double episodes of *Supergirl* on Tuesdays at 9pm on Warner TV (available on StarHub Channel 515 and Singtel Channel 306), premiering 31 May 2016.



# SMOOTH OPERATOR

F\*\*\* caught up with a very charming Eric Bana in Melbourne, where he talks about maturing, his favourite movies, and his latest role as a smooth-talking radio journalist caught up in his own lies in comedy-drama *Special Correspondents*

By Royston Loh







## If it's a stretch imagining Eric Bana in a comedy, you're not alone.

However, before his testosterone-fueled performances in numerous Hollywood movies like *Black Hawk Down*, *Hulk*, *Troy* and *Munich*, the 47-year-old Australian actor began his acting career in a sketch comedy series, *Full Frontal* (1993).

Even Ricky Gervais, who directs and co-stars with Bana in comedy-drama *Special Correspondents*, thought he was getting a brooding and serious leading man when he cast Bana as his first choice based on his “good acting chops and depth... I had no idea that he got his start in comedy. I thought I was getting this brooding thespian, this serious leading man from *Munich* and it turns out that he's just an idiot like me. A slightly taller, slightly younger, slightly more muscly Australian version of me,” says Gervais.

In *Special Correspondents*, Bana plays Frank Bonneville, an arrogant but charismatic New York based radio journalist who is dispatched to Ecuador along with his hapless technician, Ian Finch (Gervais), to report on a potential rebel coup. On arrival at the airport, Finch realises he has mistakenly thrown away their passports, tickets and money, and the two hatch a plan to fake frontline reports, and their own kidnappings from their hideout above a Spanish restaurant in Queens. As their reports on the conflict escalate, they become a national sensation, captivating the hearts of listeners across America, which leaves them having to sneak into Ecuador for real in order to untangle their web of lies.

The cast also includes Vera Farmiga, Kelly Macdonald, Benjamin Bratt and America Ferrara.

In real life, the ruggedly handsome Bana is very much like how we see him on screen, just much bigger and taller – all of 1.89 metres! In a swanky suite at Melbourne's Crown Metropol, I shyly stretch out my hand, which Bana quickly grabs for a nice firm shake. And while I was wondering how big can one's hands get, he noticed an old watch I was wearing on my right wrist and asked about it. “Oh, it's an old ‘Pepsi’ Rolex that's, erm, very old,” I hear myself mutter, to which he replied with a very reassuring, “Beautiful, very nice!”

“Really?” I whisper to myself. I wanted to take it off, the watch, like a fan would, to exchange for his. I restrained myself less I seem too eager. I was too shy to stare but I'm sure his will be too big for me anyway, his wrist size...



**So after this movie, do you still believe everything that's in the news?**

Ah, it depends on where I'm getting my news from. News is like shopping in the supermarket. If you're in the confectionary aisle, you get lots of sugar; if you're in the health food aisle, you probably get some good raw food. I think it depends on which website and which channel you're watching.

**Did you base your research on any journalists you've met in the course of your career?**

Radio is quite popular in Australia, so we have a history of very famous radio personalities. But Ricky (Gervais) wrote the character really well, so most of what's there is pretty much on the page. Some parts of his voice and the way he presents himself I guess I picked up from over the years but he's mainly based on the way he wrote the character.

**What's your worst experience with a journalist, from which country?**

Oh, I can't. I can't spill the beans... But I've been pretty lucky actually. [laughs]

**Okay, what do you hate being asked most then?** [rolls eyes playfully]

I am usually not very interesting over personal questions. And it's always hard to remember funny stories. Usually, if you're having a good time at a film, you're having a laugh everyday at always the stuff that's completely inappropriate to repeat. So in a perfect world, you end up with no stories that can be repeated.

**That sort of bombs my next question...**

What's the funniest thing? [laughs]

**It's more like cite an improv with Ricky that was so funny or crude that, obviously, did not make the cut?**

Nice twist! Well, not necessarily so crude. Ricky and I will always improvise but there comes a point where you're editing the movie and the story wants to keep moving forward. Especially in the third act where it builds up, when we end up in the jail cell: we had this hilarious scene where I start getting really attracted to Ricky and I start to say to him that he's really sexy and he reminds me of Jimi Hendrix... It went





on for about ten minutes, this conversation between the two of us, and it was very funny! But at that point of the movie, it's moving really fast towards the end so quite often a lot of those things end up not being used because they kind of stop the movie from moving forward. It may probably end up in the uptake thing. It a nice release to do this with someone as funny as Ricky.

**You were Ricky's first choice for the role. How did he approach you...straight-faced or jokingly?**

It was straight up. It was a phone call and then we had lunch together, and we got along really well straight away. I said yes immediately even before I read the script because I'm just a huge fan. It's one of those very few occasions where you're a fan of someone and not only as a performer or as a director, but rather you're in a movie with him and then fulfilling those capacities. So it's a real dream come true, and it's very hard to come across writer/performer/directors, a very rare thing. So to be in a movie with somebody that you've admired for that long and suddenly you're in a scene together – that's a dream come true.

**So obviously the feeling was mutual as he was looking for a stud, and he chose you.**

[laughs] Well, he was looking for a straight guy. It's a funny thing because it's not often in comedies that you have two straight characters in terms of not wacky characters. Sort of they are both pretty straight, normal guys put in an unusual situation, that's where a lot of the humour comes from.

And he didn't cast me because of my comedy background; he cast me because of my dramatic background. So I knew going in that for the comedy to work, it's about being a straight guy, and then I realised once I got in there that it's a movie about two straights guys really.

**How do you rate Ricky as a director, any room for improvement?**

[laughs] Nah, he was a dream director to work

with. We didn't even work very long hours, I think we were finished most days about four or five o'clock and we had dinner by six o'clock. Which is very handy, because I like dialing out when I'm at home alone every night, so for me it was great. [laughs] Nah, for me, he's just fantastic to work with.

**Ever thought of going back to the director's chair again?**

Maybe one day if I find the right project. I did a documentary; next I think it would be fun to do a narrative. I don't read scripts wanting to direct something. If I want to direct something, it'll be something I write myself or something that I generate. I tend not to read scripts looking for a director. I'm happy for someone else to do the hard work.

**As you mature, what roles do you gravitate towards: comedy or action?**

Do you know what? I've always been very open and I think it's very dangerous to just tell yourself, "I'm only going to do this" or, "I'm only going to do that". The reality is it changes every year. Quite often, it's a reflection of what you're not in the mood for, rather than what you're in the mood for. Does that make sense? You might do two movies that are quite similar and then you tell yourself, "I don't want to do that kind of movies, I want to do something else". So it changes every six to 12 months, depending on what you've just done. It depends on where you are as a person – you might not be in the mood for dark drama for whatever reason. You might be at a point in your life where some film feels like a good thing to do. I'm always very open.

**What's your take on movies premiering on a paid channel instead of a cinema?**

This is my first time. It's interesting comparing the two. I guess I've been on all sides of the fence – I've been with big movies that have released very well and I've been with small movies that haven't been released very well. So to see this Netflix model where in the first 48 hours, I've got more text messages and emails from my friends and family than ever before

on any movie makes me realise, "Wow!" If you want something to be seen, this is an excellent platform. And it's exciting for us, as actors, directors, writers and producers. For someone being aware of your project and wanting to see it, but not seeing it, means nothing. So this is bridging that gap between someone being aware, being interested and then seeing it straight away.

**Do you think the bigger Hollywood boys should be worried?**

Well, it's not so much the Hollywood boys. I think the distributors need to be afraid. Fair enough, because over the years, especially the last five to ten, they've concentrated very heavily on big, large tent pole movies and haven't given much space to the smaller movies. Like if this were a cinematic release, it would be very hard for us to get a good number of cinemas and big advertising campaigns. It'll be very difficult. So millions more people will see this film because it's on Netflix. For us, it's great. For moviemakers, it's a fantastic thing. And for the audience, it's even better because you're going to see more movies, and good quality movies because it's a good high bar they are raising.

**So what must you have with you when you're binge watching at home?**

When I'm travelling, I love a good set of headphones. And when I'm at home it depends what time of the day it is, maybe a nice glass of red wine. [laughs]

**What's your favourite movie and which movie do you re-watch most often?**

*Mad Max* is my favourite movie of all time, the very first one. I think it's a lot easier to re-watch comedies than it is to re-watch dramas, and I'll say (*This Is*) *Spinal Tap* (1984) will be one of my favourite comedies of all time – the one I've probably seen the most.

*Special Correspondents* is now showing exclusively on Netflix.







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R(A)

REVIEWS ANONYMOUS

**Captain America: Civil War**

Elvis & Nixon

**Everybody Wants Some**

Finding Mr Right 2

**I Am Wrath**

The Faith of Anna Waters

**The Family Fang**

The Witch

**Where to Invade Next**

And more...

**EQUALS**

And now for the payload: just how does Singapore measure up as a scenic locale?  
As it turns out, surprisingly well.



# CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR

**Genre:** Action/Adventure **Director:** Anthony Russo, Joe Russo

**Cast:** Chris Evans, Robert Downey Jr, Scarlett Johansson, Sebastian Stan, Anthony Mackie, Paul Bettany, Jeremy Renner, Don Cheadle, Elizabeth Olsen, Paul Rudd, Chadwick Boseman, Emily VanCamp, Daniel Brühl, Frank Grillo, William Hurt, Martin Freeman **Run Time:** 2 hrs 27 mins **Rating:** PG (Some Violence) **Opens:** 28 April 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Earth's mightiest heroes are torn asunder in this, the 13<sup>th</sup> film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Following calamitous incidents in New York, Washington D.C., Sokovia and Lagos, the politicians of the world seek to establish a governing body to supervise the actions of the Avengers. Tony Stark/Captain America (Downey Jr) agrees to sign what becomes known as 'The Sokovia Accords', while Steve Rogers/Captain America (Evans) refuses to comply. Sam Wilson/Falcon (Mackie), Wanda Maximoff/Scarlett Witch (Olsen), Sharon Carter/Agent 13 (VanCamp), Clint Barton/Hawkeye (Renner) and Scott Lang/Ant-Man (Rudd) take Rogers' side. Backing up Stark are Natasha Romanoff/Black Widow (Johansson), James Rhodes/War Machine (Cheadle), Vision (Bettany), and new additions T'challa/Black Panther (Boseman) and Peter Parker/Spider-Man (Holland). In the meantime, Rogers is still tracking down Bucky Barnes/the Winter Soldier (Stan), his childhood friend who was brainwashed into becoming a ruthless killing machine. Then there's the enigmatic Dr. Helmut Zemo (Brühl), who seeks details on one of the Winter Soldier's past missions to enact a treacherous scheme. If the world's heroes are too busy fighting one another, who will protect everyone else?

It's generally agreed upon that 2014's *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* is among the strongest entries in the MCU thus far. It's an intense political thriller with lavish action spectacle and a resonant emotional component woven into a concinnate whole. With that film's directors Joe and Anthony Russo and its writers Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely returning for *Civil War*, we had appropriately high expectations. *Civil War* is not so much a standalone *Captain America* movie as it is *Avengers 2.5*, packing in quite a number of characters from the MCU and introducing a couple of new ones. There are lots of moving parts and the story comes off as disjointed. The film gets off to a wobbly start, lacking particularly striking imagery or an impactful action sequence to open with. The source of the conflict at the heart of the film is established clearly enough, but Rogers' and Stark's resentment for each other doesn't get enough room to really simmer to a boil.

In the comics, the *Civil War* event centred on secret identities and superhero registration. Since secret identities have largely been a non-issue in the MCU, collateral damage has become the catalyst for conflict. There are some pretty high stakes and the film wants us to take the rift between the MCU's two biggest heroes very seriously, but not at the expense of quips and general joking about. There are many humorous



moments that do land and a reference to *Empire Strikes Back* had this reviewer doubling over with laughter. Cap, Falcon and Bucky also share a real 'bro' moment that's quite endearing. However, there are several instances where the one-liners result in a sense of flippancy, undermining the gravity of the situation at hand.

Both Evans and Downey Jr have become very comfortable with their roles as Captain America and Iron Man respectively. There is a valiant attempt at having both parties make valid points, though the film tends to side with Cap because, well, he's in the title. There's plenty of snarky back-and-forth jibes, but the ideological disagreements get no room to breathe. There's not very much to say about the performances of all the returning cast members, since the characterisation is generally consistent with how they've been drawn in previous films. Stan continues to be eminently sympathetic as Bucky – half puppy, half killing machine. Vision and Scarlet Witch share a few scenes together, as a nod to the characters' romance in the comics, but these come off as superfluous. The budding romance between Cap and Agent 13 feels extremely tacked on. There are plenty of references to previous entries in the series, with an emphasis on *Winter Soldier* and *Age of Ultron*, so one wouldn't quite be able to make head or tail of this going in blind.

Fans will be pleased to know that both Black Panther and Spider-Man are handled as well as possible. Boseman brings a stern dignity to the role of the Wakandan prince who is both royalty and costumed crime-fighter, the requisite outsider with no prior link to the Avengers. Stark ropes in teenage science whiz and vigilante Peter Parker. Holland's portrayal of Spider-Man feels very true to the spirit of the character: the wisecracks, the wide-eyed awe, the pubescent awkwardness, it's all there in the right amounts. Marisa Tomei briefly shows up as Parker's Aunt May, and the Spider-Man scenes have increased our anticipation of the upcoming *Spider-Man: Homecoming* all the more. The design of the suit is divisive: while it harks back to the more traditional

artwork of the likes of Steve Ditko and John Romita Sr., the slightly old-fashioned spandex look doesn't quite fit in with the established MCU aesthetic, especially since it's established that Stark designed the suit for Parker.

The 'villain problem' that has plagued most MCU movies continues here. Helmut Zemo, who is markedly different from the costumed supervillain of the comics, is portrayed as a sly manipulator lurking behind the scenes for his own ends, pulling the marionette strings and fanning the flames of internecine strife. Unfortunately, Brühl makes so little of a mark that this reviewer had to go back to write this paragraph after completing the review, initially forgetting the need to elaborate on the villain.

The standout action sequence is, naturally, the full-on clash between the two factions set at an airport in Leipzig. The scene is packed with fun visual gags and moments engineered to get the audience on their feet, cheering. It's quite a shame then that the rest of the action sequences, perhaps barring the climactic brawl, are generally forgettable. The heavy use of shaky-cam and breakneck editing means we can't take in the choreography or get a good sense of who's doing what in the middle of a fight.

There's a lot in *Civil War* that works fine and the people making these movies have enough experience under their belts to not make a complete fumble of things. However, because many of us are experiencing comic book movie fatigue, it takes a lot more than general competence to get us truly excited. There's ultimately very little in *Civil War* that's actually truly novel. It's a victory, but far from a flawless one.

**Summary:** The introduction of Spider-Man and Black Panther into the MCU are highlights, but *Civil War*'s lack of cohesiveness and the hard-to-follow fight sequences prevent it from being the earth-shattering event it's pitched as.

Jedd Jong



# ELVIS & NIXON

**Genre:** Drama **Director:** Liza Johnson **Cast:** Michael Shannon, Kevin Spacey, Alex Pettyfer, Colin Hanks, Evan Peters, Johnny Knoxville **Rating:** TBA/87 mins **Opens:** 19 May 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆

Some events are enshrined in pop-cultural memory not for their magnitude or significance, but purely by dint of being, well, memorable. The 1971 meeting between then-POTUS Richard Nixon and the King Elvis Presley is just such an event, and the movie chronicling the circumstances leading up to the iconic snapshot between the two is predictably offbeat without coming off as particularly purposeful or groundbreaking. *Elvis & Nixon* has plenty of quirky humour and is fairly enjoyable, but can't quite justify the rationale for its being made in the first place.

So how much cinematic material can one dredge out of a single photograph, even if a picture does tell a thousand words? Not that much, but surprisingly more than most would expect. *Elvis & Nixon* also tells the tale of the behind-the-scenes guys, the poor schmucks who have to cater to each and every prima donna demand Elvis or Nixon make. Y'see, Elvis (Michael Shannon) wants to get a badge and become a Federal-Agent-At-Large so he can play his part in the war on drugs, but it's really best friend Jerry Schilling (Alex Pettyfer) who has to run around and try to set things up. Meanwhile, the irascible President Nixon (Kevin Spacey) wants nothing to do with frivolous types like rock 'n roll music stars, and it's everything his White House aides Bud Krogh (Colin Hanks) and Dwight Chapin (Evan Peters) can do to convince him what a PR boost an association with the King will give his presidency.

Sure, the anecdotal story behind Nixon and Presley's meeting is an amusing one. Shannon and Spacey ham it up as their respective American icons, and the awkward collision of the political and entertainment realms is unexpectedly ripe for milking the laughs. With two strong character actors in the leads, *Elvis & Nixon* is far more compelling than its source material would indicate, but that's still not saying much. Whenever Elvis turns pensive and ruminates about the nature of celebrity or the loss of his authentic self, it comes across as slightly false, because the rest of the film has



Shannon portraying him at his eccentric best (worst?). The constant mollicoddling Elvis receives from Schilling paints him as a petulant man-child, and President Nixon, what with his lunchtime naps and predilection for M&Ms, isn't much better. There is no malice in the film's infantilisation of Presley or Nixon, but the irreverent spirit of things gets in the way of its making more insightful commentary.

The lack of a thematic core hurts *Elvis & Nixon* considerably. While Elvis is on an anti-drugs crusade and sporadic references are made to the then-raging Vietnam War, neither is engaged with enough for the film to actually say something about these hot-button issues. Nor can the film claim to champion the cause of under-appreciated auxiliaries, because the characters played by Hanks, Peters and Pettyfer are woefully underdeveloped. Only Pettyfer's Schilling gets any kind of backstory, and even then, it feels piecemeal and obligatory. The quadruple-threat of Nixon, Presley, Shannon and Spacey is hard to overshadow, especially when Shannon and Spacey seem to genuinely

enjoy their performances, but both Hanks and Peters have previously demonstrated that they can hold their own in ensemble flicks (in *Parkland* and *X-Men: Days of Future Past* respectively). They are not given the chance to do so in *Elvis & Nixon*.

In the process of straddling the fine line between docudrama and anecdotal comedy, *Elvis & Nixon* veers too much in the latter direction and ends up not straddling anything at all. Just like the meeting between Elvis and Nixon is a mere footnote in the storied (if not quite entirely glittering) legacies both men have etched into 20<sup>th</sup> century American history, this film is destined to be no more than a pleasant afternoon's diversion for the enterprising cinema-goer.

**Summary:** Fun but trivial. Shannon and Spacey are immensely watchable, but can't elevate the film above mildly interesting sideshow.

Leslie Wong



# EQUALS

**Genre:** Sci-Fi, Romance **Director:** Drake Doremus

**Cast:** Kristen Stewart, Nicholas Hoult, Guy Pearce, Jacki Weaver, Claudia Kim (voice) **Rating:** NC16 (Scene of Intimacy)

**Run Time:** 102 mins **Opens:** 26 May 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



It's taken some time, but the other major Hollywood production to have filmed on our sunny shores in 2014 (the other being the less-than-overwhelming *Hitman: Agent 47*) is finally hitting our cineplexes. And the overall verdict is: less than overwhelming. *Equals* is by no means an unmitigated disaster, but it's just difficult to muster up enthusiasm for a movie about humans who don't feel any emotions. If director Drake Doremus wanted to reproduce his protagonists' stoniness and indifference in his audience, then the movie's undoubtedly a resounding success.

In a futuristic utopia where human emotion has been eradicated so as to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress for all nations (sorry, couldn't resist), mankind has become supremely self-regulated and efficient. Everyone plays their part to perfection and in return, the state (here christened the Collective) guarantees effortless comfort and wellbeing. When illustrator Silas (Nicholas Hoult) succumbs to a mysterious illness that reawakens the capability to feel, he finds himself growing more and more attracted to his enigmatic colleague Nia (Kristen Stewart). What ensues is a love story set in a society where love is seen as a nefarious infection.

To its credit, *Equals* executes that simple premise to minimalistic perfection. Sci-fi and post-apocalyptic junkies will no doubt wish that more attention was given to world-building and contextual backstory, but the truth is that *Equals* knows what it wants to focus on, and prioritises accordingly. The relationship between Silas and Nia is central to the film, and most of the sci-fi elements are fleshed out if and only when they bear directly upon the romance. We get the bare bones of what made the Collective the way it is, and not much else. Potentially intriguing societal characteristics are referenced once and never elaborated upon, as if they might steal the limelight away from Nia and Silas' burgeoning passion. This makes the entire film feel a little lightweight and sketchy, too insubstantial to make any lasting impact on the audience.

It's not as if the romance between Nia and Silas isn't compelling, far from it. Stewart has received plenty of flak for coming across as wooden and expressionless (to the extent that some might say she's perfect for a role that doesn't require much emoting), but just because she phoned it in during the *Twilight* saga doesn't mean she can't act at all. She and Hoult convincingly portray the simultaneous fear, confusion and ecstasy that come with experiencing emotions for the first time, so there's at least some level of relatability in the film over and above the flimsy world of the Collective. Making people care about characters that start off devoid of emotion is no mean feat, especially since it's difficult to pin down exactly what Nia and Silas are up against (apart from the sudden onset of their hormonal impulses, that is).

And now for the payload: just how does Singapore measure up as a scenic locale? As it turns out, surprisingly well. Setting a film on our island home may not have worked that well for *Hitman*, but when called upon to supply backdrops for an indeterminate future cityscape,

Singapore delivers the goods. Not every scene was filmed here, but you should recognise Henderson Waves, Gardens by the Bay and Marina Barrage, just to name a few. Whatever else it may lack, *Equals* packs undeniably stylish visuals, a significant portion of which it owes to Singapore's alien architecture.

One can only get so many kicks out of gleefully exclaiming, "I walked in the exact same spot that Nicholas Hoult did in that scene!" though. Like a piece of abstract art, *Equals* lends itself easily to admiration but not so much to identification. As the film winds down to a close, you'll find yourself searching for an appropriate adjective to sum up the whole experience, not just the visuals, and fail. There's something lacking, just like in all its emotionless characters.

**Summary:** Nice to look at but barely registers otherwise. KStew does an OK job. Watch out for local actress-DJ Vernetta Lopez's blink-and-you'll-miss-it cameo.

Leslie Wong



# EVERYBODY WANTS SOME!!

**Genre:** Comedy/Drama **Director:** Richard Linklater  
**Cast:** Blake Jenner, Glen Powell, Tyler Hoechlin, Ryan Guzman, Wyatt Russell, Justin Street, Zoey Deutch **Run Time:** 116 mins **Rating:** M18 (Drug Use and Sexual Scenes)  
**Opens:** 28 April 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



This reviewer went into the cinema expecting a nostalgic feel-good homage to the 1980s, and sat through the first twenty minutes thoroughly unimpressed by what appeared to be an over-privileged white jock's coming-of-age story set in the 1980s. But as the credits rolled, he told himself that he really should have gotten around to watching one of Richard Linklater's earlier films. Perhaps then he would have known what to expect from *Everybody Wants Some!!*, because he certainly didn't expect it to be as thought-provoking and mellow as few films in the age of blockbusters still are.

*Everybody Wants Some!!* is Linklater's spiritual sequel to his 1993 high school comedy *Dazed and Confused*, which launched the careers of Ben Affleck, Matthew McConaughey and Milla Jovovich, among others. This time around, he's cast Blake Jenner (previously best known for his work on *Glee* and for being Supergirl Melissa Benoist's husband) in the role of college freshman Jake, around whom the gently lyrical events of the movie unfold. 'Gently lyrical' is not how most people would describe booze-added parties, casual promiscuity and college baseball machismo, but somehow Linklater manages to pull it off. Regardless of whether Jake's chatting up aspiring thespian Beverly (Zoey Deutch), listening to upperclassman Finnegan (Glen Powell) spew profound nuggets of wisdom or getting high on weed with self-styled spiritual guru Willoughby (Wyatt Russell), there's an ineffable touch of something that quite literally turns dirt into movie gold.

It's not a process that happens immediately, though. The first twenty minutes, which gave this reviewer such a misleading impression, are a whirlwind tour of the crassest, most superficial aspects of American college life. Jake's baseball seniors, played to insipid perfection by Powell, Ryan Guzman and Tyler Hoechlin, are the epitome of alpha-male egocentrism and thoughtless cruelty. It's as if Linklater wants to get all the chest-thumping stereotypes out of the way first so he can move



into more contemplative territory subsequently. Unless you happen to have been a college baseball player thirty years ago, this portion of the film will not initiate any episodes of fond reminiscing. The laughs here are firmly separated into two camps: the mean-spirited sort all the bros in the film find hilarious, and the sort that will have you snorting at how clueless these bros are.

So much for the mainstream face of American youth culture. *Everybody Wants Some!!* truly shines when it digs beneath the surface of college life to portray its less ostentatious subsets. As a figure poised uncertainly on the lines of social division, Jenner's ingenuous freshman Jake is well-suited to take viewers on a comprehensive tour of life's myriad possibilities. A chance encounter with an old high school chum gives Jake and some of his accompanying teammates a glimpse into the head-banging counter-culture of punk rock. Zoey Deutch's Beverly provides a rare opportunity for the theatrical and athletic worlds to collide, and the result is less disastrous than one might expect. Some of the bros even reveal unexpected sides of themselves. The noticeable lack of a problem that has to be solved by the end of the movie allows these strange inter-mixings to take centre stage, such that the movie really feels like a microcosm of college life.

If the posterity of *Dazed and Confused* is



anything to go by, then we should expect big things in the futures of Linklater's young stars. Jenner convincingly portrays Jake as an unformed mass, difficult to pin down because he has yet to figure out what he wants to stand for. Deutch (daughter of *Back to the Future*'s Lea Thompson) and Russell (son of Kurt and Goldie Hawn) ably prove that talent is occasionally hereditary. Justin Street (son of All-American baseball player James Street) is a hoot as the borderline sociopathic Jay Niles, while Powell's bro-ness is so effusive that he has been quoted commenting on the unusually large number of roles he gets which require him to make use of that quality (he was also a frat boy on TV's *Scream Queens* and part of Sly's crew in *The Expendables 3*).

The movie ends on an unconventionally open-ended note, not one of those gimmicky cliffhangers or sequel baits, but rather an all-too-rare example of an end that is also a beginning. Life is a movie that runs for far longer than 116 minutes, as Linklater also demonstrated with his 12-year epoch *Boyhood*.

**Summary:** Occasionally meandering but always poignant, *Everybody Wants Some!!* captures both the idealism and irresponsibility of youth in a narrative suffused with the zeitgeist of the 1980s.

Leslie Wong



# FINDING MR. RIGHT 2

## 北京遇上西雅图之 不二情书

**Genre:** Romance, Comedy **Director:** Xue Xiaolu

**Cast:** Tang Wei, Wu Xiubo, Kara Hui, Paul Chun, Wu Yanshu

**Rating:** PG13 (Some Coarse Language) **Run Time:** 131 mins

**Opens:** 5 May 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



If you even bothered to read *Finding Mr. Right 2*'s original Chinese title above, you might have thought, "Wow, what a mouthful. Couldn't they have found something snappier?" Snappy, however, is the exact opposite of what *Finding Mr. Right 2* aims to be. In an age where 'instant' and 'abbreviated' have become cardinal values, this romcom is a luxuriant expanse of leisurely reflection on the nature of human connections and the written word. It's a literary love fest, and as un-sequel-like as a sequel can get and still call itself a sequel.

*Finding Mr. Right 2* does an *Overheard* and returns for a second outing with nothing in common with its predecessor except its director and two leads. Jiao Jiao (Tang Wei) is a casino hostess in Macau with a sharp eye for both high stakes and high rollers. Daniel (Wu Xiubo) is a savvy property agent in Los Angeles targeting the Chinese nouveau-rich market. Both have nothing in common either, apart from living and working away from their places of birth. When a strange twist of fate and postal misdirection puts them in correspondence with each other, the duo forge an unlikely spiritual connection, in spite of not knowing each other's real identity. Can this epistolary relationship withstand the test of time and long-distance?

Like the budding shoots of affection that sprout between Jiao Jiao and Daniel, *Finding Mr. Right 2* is a movie that takes time to find its groove and traction. There's almost something philosophical about its lack of pace and meandering plot: perhaps it's making a statement about the elusiveness of true love? All you cynics who just barfed after reading the last sentence will no doubt remark on how the sub-plots involving Kara Hui as Jiao Jiao's surrogate mother figure Ling and Paul Chun as Daniel's empty nester prospective client don't add anything to the central romance, and you won't be entirely wrong. The movie can become downright episodic as Jiao Jiao moves from one failed romance to another, but the constant exchange of letters between Jiao Jiao and Daniel

acts as a narrative anchor, pulling most of the disparate bits together. And as for the bits that remain floating out in their own orbits, they come across as more character exposition than unnecessary window dressing.

Bibliophiles will also appreciate the movie's celebration of the written word, from letter-writing to Chinese calligraphy and classic literature, which almost takes precedence over the love story between Jiao Jiao and Daniel. Daniel and Paul Chun's Grandpa quote classical Chinese poetry by the likes of Su Dong Po and Qu Yuan at each other, the deus ex machina of the whole film is an actual 1970 book by American playwright Helene Hanff titled *84, Charing Cross Road* and there are multiple instances of one character remarking on another's handwriting. *Finding Mr. Right 2* certainly isn't the first movie to bemoan the replacement of paper, pen and ink by Kindles, 'hanyu pinyin' keyboards and ubiquitous information technology, but it's quite possibly the first to do so from a dual East-West perspective. On-location shoots in LA and London allow for a truly transnational take on the unifying power of literature, though admittedly they also serve as barely-disguised travelogues for well-heeled Chinese tourists. But if there's one thing the movie is aware of, it's the constant interplay between art and economics.

It's no mean feat carrying the weight of a movie extending in several narrative and/or thematic

directions all at once, but well, it's Tang Wei we're talking about here. Google reviews for any of her past films and you'll find that even if the reviewer hated the film, he or she praised Tang's performance. There's no one quite like her working today, and she slips into the role of Jiao Jiao with consummate ease. *Finding Mr. Right 2*'s script often delves into territory too *cheem* for the average *jiak kantang* Chinese Singaporean, but when Tang's enunciating the words, you'll get the meaning behind them anyway. Wu Xiubo is suave and charismatic as the rogue with a heart of gold, but Tang is the undisputed centerpiece of the film, with the solid performances of Kara Hui and Paul Chun only welcome bonuses.

The film's main allure for its primary Mainland Chinese demographic is undoubtedly the 'exotic' foreign locales (and the vicarious thrill of seeing homegrown movie stars strolling around in them), but as walking pieces of cultural/linguistic *rojak*, Singaporeans are better placed to appreciate its duality. While not one of those hideously high-budget and low-quality US-China co-productions, *Finding Mr. Right 2* is an international love story in its own right.

**Summary:** One for the scions of literature and those pining for a less frenetic pace of life. For everyone else, there's Tang Wei.

Leslie Wong



# I AM WRATH

**Genre:** Action/Crime/Drama **Director:** Chuck Russell

**Cast:** John Travolta, Christopher Meloni, Amanda Schull, Rebecca De Mornay, Sam Trammell, Luis Da Silva, Patrick St. Esprit **Run Time:** 90 mins **Rating:** NC16 (Violence)

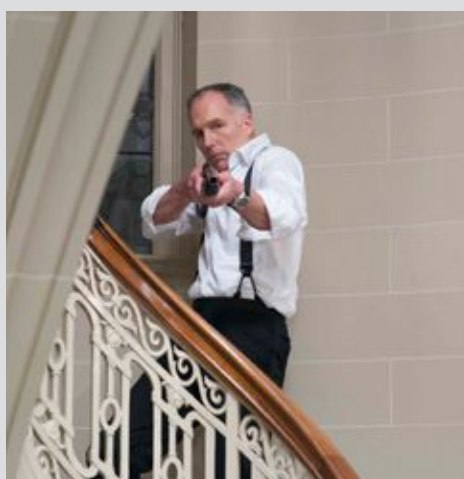
**Opens:** 12 May 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆☆

John Travolta is very angry, and you won't like him when he's angry. In this action thriller, Travolta plays Stanley Hill, a mild-mannered auto manufacturing plant manager whose wife Vivian (De Mornay) is murdered in cold blood by some thugs right in front of his eyes. Frustrated by the inefficiency of the justice system, Stanley decides to take matters into his own hands in his quest for vengeance. He turns to his old friend Dennis (Meloni), who runs a barbershop but who used to work alongside Stanley in the distant, shadowy past. As Stanley and Dennis cut a swath through the city's criminal element and uncover a conspiracy involving state officials, Stanley's daughter Abbie (Schull) finds herself in the thugs' crosshairs too.

If you're thinking, "Gee, this sounds like the kind of thing Nicolas Cage would sleepwalk through," you're absolutely right. Cage was apparently slated to star in *I Am Wrath*, with legendary director William Friedkin (*The Exorcist*, *The French Connection*) attached, but that incarnation fell through. Instead, we get the man with whom Cage once swapped faces. It's no secret that every actor wants to be Liam Neeson in *Taken*, but not every actor has what it takes. Here, John Travolta is one of the least convincing action heroes in recent memory, complete with a paunch and a ghastly hairpiece. It seems odd that Dennis is a barber by trade, and doesn't mention a word about how odd his pal's hair looks.

This is a movie that takes itself very seriously, taking its title from Jeremiah 6:11 in the Bible, which begins, "But I am full of the wrath of the LORD, and I cannot hold it in". Because it is so very difficult to take Travolta seriously as a badass, *I Am Wrath* flits between being unintentionally funny and just dreadfully dull. His co-star Meloni would make a much better lead - now there's a believable middle-aged guy who could throw down with gun-toting, knife-wielding no-goodniks. To go earlier than *Taken*, *I Am Wrath* clearly wants to be *Death Wish*. Now, Charles Bronson was a grizzled guy



nobody wanted to mess with. Travolta looks like he's midway through a transformation into a wax statue of himself.

From the stock 'dead wife motivation' to the non-descript gangster villains to the corrupt authority figures, *I Am Wrath* has not a single original bone in its body. The decision to set the movie in Columbus, Ohio seems like an odd one, to say the least. We have nothing against Columbus, Ohio - we've never been to Columbus, Ohio - but as filmed by director Chuck Russell and cinematographer Andrzej Sekula, it looks extremely boring. Incidentally, Sekula was the Director

of Photography on *Pulp Fiction*, which starred Travolta. *I Am Wrath*'s tagline is, "I lay my vengeance upon them," obviously meant to evoke Ezekiel 25:17, the Bible verse famously paraphrased by Samuel L. Jackson's character Jules Winnfield in *Pulp Fiction*. Let this be a lesson for every mediocre to terrible movie out there: do not remind the audience of far superior work.

**Summary:** John Travolta is as unconvincing an action hero as they come in this lazy, wholly forgettable sub-*Taken* dreck.

Jedd Jong



# THE FAITH OF ANNA WATERS

**Genre:** Horror/Thriller **Director:** Kelvin Tong **Cast:** Elizabeth Rice, Matthew Settle, Adina Herz, Colin Borgonon, Adrian Pang, Jaymee Ong, Pamelyn Chee, Paul Lucas, Victoria Mintey, Gus Donald **Run Time:** 95 mins **Rating:** NC16 (Horror) **Opens:** 12 May 2016

**RATING** ★★☆☆

Singaporean filmmaker Kelvin Tong dips into Hollywood waters with this horror thriller. Chicagoan journalist Jamie Waters (Rice) travels to Singapore when she learns that her sister Anna (Condy) has died in an apparent suicide. Sam Harris (Settle), Anna's ex-husband, is staying in an old bungalow inherited from his parents. Sam and Anna's daughter Katie (Herz) insists that her mother is not really dead and senses ghostly activity that indicates so. Jamie discovers a mysterious symbol, and her research points towards an ancient demonic entity linking a spate of seemingly unrelated suicides in Singapore. Meanwhile, Father Matthew Goh (Pang) is tracking down the source of cyber attacks on multiple church websites. He brings this to the attention of Father James De Silva (Borgonon), a priest haunted by a failed exorcism years ago. Rather than a mere hacker, Father Goh believes the same ancient evil linking the suicides is perpetrating the cyber attacks. Jamie, Sam and the two priests must face a powerful other-worldly force to stop this cycle of death.

*The Faith of Anna Waters* is touted as "Singapore's first Hollywood horror movie". What that actually means is this is a Singaporean film that managed to secure financial backing from American investors, with a couple of American actors leading the cast. An English-language genre piece has the potential to travel, and the producers of the film hope *The Faith of Anna Waters* will find an audience in the States and elsewhere beyond Singapore.

Director Tong also wrote the screenplay and the film is something of a mashup of the supernatural horror and techno-thriller subgenres. The premise of a tech-savvy demon can easily become ridiculous and certain aspects of this story seem a little dated. The project was originally entitled 'Email', and haunted email movies are past their sell-by date by about 15 years. There are so many disparate ingredients flung into the pot, from cyber threats to incurable diseases to allusions to the Biblical



Tower of Babel to a family mystery rooted in Singapore's colonial past, that this reviewer was less spooked by the film and more curious to see where it all leads. Unfortunately, Tong fails to satisfyingly tie these plot threads together, with the film often falling back on genre clichés and cribbing liberally from *The Exorcist* and supernatural horror movies of that ilk.

*Twilight*'s Nikki Reed was originally attached to star, but was replaced by *Mad Men*'s Elizabeth Rice due to scheduling conflicts. Jamie Waters is the stock 'intrepid journalist' character through and through, snooping around abandoned basements and thumbing through archival newspaper clippings in search of the truth. As proactive a protagonist as Jamie is, she's just not a terribly interesting character. Similarly, *Band of Brothers* and *Gossip Girls* actor Settle is bland and unremarkable as Jamie's former brother-in-law. Nothing really dynamic comes of the conflict between the two, with Jamie blaming Sam for leaving her sister and niece.

Herz, formerly a contestant on *The Voice Kids Australia*, makes her acting debut in the film. Unfortunately, her inexperience shows through, as she turns in an awkward and stiff performance. Australian actor Borgonon brings enough dignity to bear as Father De Silva in a performance that's clearly patterned after Max

von Sydow's role in the afore-mentioned *The Exorcist*. Pang turns the earnestness up to eleven as priest/cyber-sleuth Father Goh, but there's the sense that a considerably younger actor might have been better-suited to the role.

The film's production values are decent, with cinematographer Wade Muller establishing an appropriately spooky mood. The film employs digital visual effects sparingly, Tong wisely avoiding an overuse of CGI. There are also some effectively-staged gory moments showcasing competent special effects make-up work by Thai studio QFX Workshop. The film does rely too heavily on Joe Ng and Ting Si Hao's score to announce to the audience that they should be afraid. Music and sound effects should enhance or accompany an inherently scary moment instead of merely serving to startle viewers. There are some potentially fascinating ideas at work in *The Faith of Anna Waters*, but these are muddled in an unnecessarily convoluted story with a lack of focus.

**Summary:** The bubbling cauldron of ideas in *The Faith of Anna Waters* hides a fairly conventional supernatural horror film, the intriguing fragments failing to cohere into an engrossing whole.

Jedd Jong



# THE FAMILY FANG

**Genre:** Drama/Comedy **Director:** Jason Bateman

**Cast:** Jason Bateman, Nicole Kidman, Christopher Walken, Maryann Plunkett, Marin Ireland, Harris Yulin, Linda Emond **Run**

**Time:** 1 hr 45 mins **Rating:** PG13 (Some Coarse Language)

**Opens:** 12 May 2016

**RATING** ★★★★★

The family that creates art together stays together. Well, maybe that's not a hard and fast rule. Baxter Fang (Bateman) is a novelist struggling with writer's block while his sister Annie (Kidman) is a Hollywood actress and frequent tabloid target. As children, Annie was 'Child A' and Baxter was 'Child B', accomplices in their parents' elaborate performance art pieces. Caleb (Walken) and Camille (Plunkett) garnered attention throughout the art world, staging various stunts in public with the aid of their children. The now-grown Fang siblings are affected by their past in different ways, and have become estranged from their parents. When Caleb and Camille suddenly vanish, Baxter and Annie immediately assume it's just another stunt, since their parents have often cried wolf in the name of art. As the mystery surrounding Caleb and Camille's disappearance thickens, Baxter and Annie are forced to confront some painful, uncomfortable memories, making sense of their roles in their parents' lives and art.

*The Family Fang* is based on the 2011 novel of the same name by Kevin Wilson, adapted for the screen by playwright David Lindsay-Abaire. Star Bateman also directs, marking his second outing behind the camera after *Bad Words*. It is extremely easy for films that are couched as being 'quirky' to come off as self-consciously pretentious. *The Family Fang* revolves around some pretty eccentric characters, but it has one foot firmly planted in a world that is grounded and relatable. In its commentary on modern art, *The Family Fang* expectedly tends towards the cynical, but Bateman tempers this with surprisingly heartfelt, sincere scenes.

Modern performance art has long been the subject of scoffing and scorn, and many hold the opinion that its practitioners get off on shocking the public and that there's little value in their work otherwise. Figures like Chris Burden and Marina Abramović are some of the more obvious influences here, with the former being name-dropped in the film itself. While much of the film's humour is derived from the outlandish



nature of the pieces that Caleb and Camille create, Bateman seems careful not to mock them outright. This is a character study, with the central sibling team untangling the enigma of their parents; people who raised them but whom they've never quite understood.

Footage of the Fangs' exploits is spliced in throughout the film, parcelling out the information so we see the evolution of how it all started out as something frivolous and fun, and see how the children began to feel like they were being used as pawns in service of their parents' egos. Jack McCarthy and Kyle Donnelly portray young Baxter at different ages, with Mackenzie Smith and Taylor Rose playing young Annie. Kathryn Hahn plays a younger Camille. Because Walken is so distinctive, Jason Butler Harner's portrayal of a younger Caleb isn't wholly convincing. These segments effectively convey two childhoods consumed by misguided passion and give us plenty of reasons why Baxter and Annie are unwilling to re-enter the world they've left behind.

Bateman is as reliable a straight man as they come, a master of the 'uncertain sideways glance'. Baxter is a bit of a schlub, writing a fantasy novel about a brother and sister that draws on his own relationship with his sister. Bateman's performance never calls attention to itself, which works great since Baxter is the one nominally normal character in a sea of peculiarity. Kidman has a reputation for being somewhat frigid, so it is wonderful to see her let her guard down and embrace the role of someone who's flawed but full of life. The scene in which a sleazy director tries to convince Annie that she needs to go topless for a scene in his movie is a solid establishing character



moment. Kidman's natural Australian accent is more than a little distracting, but on the whole, she and Bateman sell their bond as siblings, very quickly getting the audience in their corner.

If you need someone to play eccentric, there's no question that Walken is your guy. The actor is known for needing very little screen time to steal a movie, and he does make his presence felt in *The Family Fang*. Caleb is very clearly the ringleader, stringing Camille and their children along in his schemes. His wife goes along with the plans out of love and their kids have no say in it. There are some tough questions in there, chief of which being, "Can what Caleb and Camille did be strictly considered child abuse?" Caleb does not become an over-the-top caricature in Walken's hands, and his fiery brashness is complemented by Plunkett's maternal warmth.

Bateman's sophomore directorial effort displays some sharp instincts for storytelling. While the central mystery is resolved a little too easily, the story is sufficiently intriguing to draw the viewer in. Any statements the film attempts to make about the art world do not overshadow the emotional journey of its sibling protagonists. It is ultimately quite a marvel that *The Family Fang* is bereft of the smart-alecky indulgence that tends to afflict films trading mostly on their quirk factor.

**Summary:** Witty yet far from obnoxious, this dark family comedy-drama is assured in tone and digs into the themes of family relationships while also voicing sound opinions on the world of performance art.

Jedd Jong



# THE WITCH

**Genre:** Horror **Director:** Robert Eggers **Cast:** Anya Taylor-Joy, Ralph Ineson, Kate Dickie, Harvey Scrimshaw, Ellie Grainger, Lucas Dawson, Bathsheba Garnett **Rating:** M18 (Some Nudity) **Run Time:** 93 mins **Opens:** 5 May 2016

**RATING** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Gather the children, board up the windows and shut the doors because the witching hour is upon us. In this historical horror drama, one 17<sup>th</sup> century New England family finds themselves tormented by demonic phenomena. William (Ineson), his wife Katherine (Dickie) and their children Thomasin (Taylor-Joy), Caleb (Scrimshaw), twins Mercy (Grainger) and Jonas (Dawson), and baby Samuel are excommunicated from a Puritan plantation and have to make a living on the outskirts of a New England settlement. The sudden disappearance of baby Samuel sets off a series of eerie happenings, with the possibility that a witch living in the woods beyond the family farm has abducted Samuel. The devoutly religious family attempts to make sense of these occurrences – is Thomasin herself a witch? Is the black goat Phillip being used as a vessel for Satan? When Caleb is struck with a mysterious ailment, is the illness the work of witches? And perhaps most importantly, where exactly is God in this family's time of crisis?

*The Witch* is the feature film debut of writer-director Robert Eggers, who drew on actual historical documents such as court transcripts and diaries to assemble the dialogue of the film. It's become a festival darling, with Eggers netting the Best Directing in a U.S. Drama award at Sundance in 2015. There are several pitfalls associated with low-budget indie debuts: the film can be too indulgent and appeal only to its makers, production values might look cheap, the acting might be stilted or attempts to play around with structure might come off as clumsy. *The Witch* avoids practically all of these. Eggers displays a meticulous eye for detail and the cinematography by Jarin Blaschke, using mostly available light, is sumptuous in its gloominess. Going against the old Hollywood adage, Eggers had to work extensively with children and animals on this project. Additionally, he could not afford to shoot the film in New England, where the story is set, and had to settle for the remote location of Kiosk, Ontario in Canada, where he eventually found suitable forests in



which to shoot. *The Witch* is dripping with ominous atmosphere, yet not in a distracting manner.

There was a bit of a stir when the Satanic Temple offered its hearty endorsement of *The Witch*. So, this means the Satanists in the film are the good guys, right? It's definitely not so cut and dried. *The Witch* is a remarkably compelling portrait of how someone's strongly-held religious beliefs can define their way of life and their attitudes towards their loved ones. The tenets of the Puritan Calvinist faith, which are generally viewed today as repressive, govern the family at the centre of *The Witch*. The fear of God's judgement hanging over their heads leads to everyone keeping secrets from each other – William wishes to keep his family together as a pious head of the household, but various factors drive them apart, with no heavenly solace in sight. While the old-timey speech and the 1600s setting might seem like an obstacle in getting invested in the story, this reviewer found himself gradually reeled in. There's also some verisimilitude in the things that never change – the young twin siblings Mercy and Jonas can get pretty annoying, and younger siblings getting on one's nerves seems like a universal constant.

Young actress Taylor-Joy has to do a great deal of dramatic heavy lifting, and is supported by character actors Ralph Ineson and Kate Dickie, who were both on *Game of Thrones*. Taylor-Joy reminded this reviewer of a young Scarlett Johansson – Thomasin projects a sense of obedience and innocence, but there's adolescent rebellion bubbling beneath the surface. There's the danger that child actors can't pull one out

of a period film, but Scrimshaw is excellent in the role of Thomasin's younger brother Caleb. Caleb is tempted by lust, and growing up in a Puritanical household, most certainly hasn't had the 'sex talk'. This could come off as very awkward, but is just provocative enough without being distasteful. Ineson's hangdog demeanour and Dickie's severity serve their respective characters well; these are parents who are desperately trying to hold the fort as other-worldly forces threaten to rend their family asunder.

It's easy to see why *The Witch* isn't for everyone. It's a slow burn, and those in search of more conventional horror movie elements might be turned off by the ponderous drama and grappling with religious themes present throughout. It's also played so seriously that certain moments can carry the slightest hint of unintentional humour. Mark Korven's soundtrack, heavy on the waterphones, is probably the most formulaic horror movie component of *The Witch*. However, this reviewer did find more than enough to sink his teeth into. Genres like horror and sci-fi can be utilised as vehicles for powerful allegories; such is the case with *The Witch*. It's a masterclass in creepiness that serves as a fine antidote to the production line teen-aimed horror flicks which flood cineplexes these days.

**Summary:** An assured directorial debut from Robert Eggers, *The Witch* is thought-provoking, unsettling and richly foreboding.

Jedd Jong



# WHERE TO INVADE NEXT

**Genre:** Documentary **Director:** Michael Moore **Cast:** Michael Moore, Krista Kiuru, Claudio Domenicali, Tim Walker, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir **Run Time:** 121 mins **Rating:** M18 (Some Nudity and Drug Use) **Opens:** 28 April 2016

**RATING** ★★★★★

After a six-year hiatus from feature films, Michael Moore, the *enfant terrible* of documentary movies, has returned with a vengeance – but a vengeance of a friendly sort. It's no secret that many Americans have become dissatisfied with their way of life, proclamations of the United States being "the greatest country on earth" getting harder and harder to make with a straight face. From income inequality to staggering student loans to unaffordable healthcare, the average 99%-er has a good deal to be frustrated about.

Moore imagines that he's been sent on a mission by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to suss out where in the world the United States should invade next. He embarks on a quest through several European countries and one North African one to see how the people do things differently from in the States. In Italy, the average worker has eight weeks paid holiday, in France, students get nutritious gourmet school lunches and Finland's top-ranked education system does away with standardised tests and excessive homework.

Next, Moore visits a coloured pencil factory in Germany where the employees work a total of 36 hours a week, he takes a tour of the surprisingly luxurious prisons in Norway, meets with female government and business leaders in Iceland and sees how Tunisia's government has rebuilt itself after overthrowing a dictator, with more than 50% of its present parliament being women. He attempts to wrap his head around the free college education offered in Slovenia and Portugal's complete decriminalisation of drug use. At the end of each segment, Moore plants an American flag in the ground wherever he is, proudly declaring that he's come across another excellent idea that the U.S. can, uh, appropriate.

Out of all the press screenings we've attended, the showing of *Where to Invade Next* probably drew the loudest laughter from the audience we've ever heard. Moore is known for being a confrontational firebrand, famously conducting



ambush interviews and staging demonstrations as part of his films. This movie sees him gentler, albeit no less driven. All the interview subjects are willing participants, largely because they're given platforms on which to wag a finger at Americans in general. The people whom Moore talks to range from schoolchildren to blue-collar workers to such luminaries as former Icelandic president Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, the world's first democratically-elected female president, and current Slovenian president Borut Pahor.

Most of the humour is derived from the sense that what we're seeing in this panorama is all too good to be true. Two hour lunch breaks? A law against sending emails after work? Prescriptions for a three-week-long spa getaway to combat stress? Corrupt bankers actually getting sentenced to prison? Absurd! This could pretty much be called "*The Grass Is Greener On the Other Side: The Movie*", and the scene of the interview subjects telling Moore how unbelievably good they have it, with a reaction shot of him looking slack-jawed, occurs multiple times. Moore also makes his point with infographics presenting bleak statistics, including one that demonstrates the slightly higher taxes in European countries afford their citizens greater benefits than the Average American has access to. As with his previous films, Moore also employs news footage and amateur video to make his point. The hardest-hitting of these is a montage of American inmates getting beaten up and otherwise abused by wardens and fellow prisoners – this is shown after Moore takes in the civilised and straight-up swanky prison facilities in Norway.

The use of humour throughout makes the audience more amenable to Moore's arguments, and in most cases, just how functional the societies being showcased are does speak for itself. While it is staggeringly one-sided, as

is Moore's *modus operandi*, the film is also compelling and persuasive. It does cover a great amount of ground, not just geographically but with regards to the subjects discussed as well. There's a strong feminist component, with several powerful, successful women sharing what they do differently. There are a few jarring tonal shifts which work astoundingly well – we go from a former Mercedes CEO talking about how the company's servers block emails sent by bosses after working hours, to a German classroom where the Holocaust is being taught, with the words 'Why Remember?' written on the chalkboard. In another scene, Moore sits down with a Norwegian father whose son was gunned down at summer camp by extremist Anders Breivik. The film's larger structure and context ensures these scenes do not feel awkwardly out of place.

If you're predisposed to despising Moore, *Where To Invade Next* might not make you do a 180 on the documentarian. As manipulative and imbalanced as it can get, *Where To Invade Next* does have an undercurrent of sincerity. Yes, Moore's antics might primarily be for our entertainment, but there is a strong sense of purpose to the tour he embarks upon here and while it still has bite, it seems a lot less bitter than some of his other work. Is it all a progressive's pipe dream? Probably, but the positivity that Moore exudes here does have its charm, and the work manages to be a thought-provoking one.

**Summary:** While it is heavily one-sided, *Where To Invade Next* sees Michael Moore weaving a fascinating, entertaining, educational and immensely funny travelogue, in which he asks, "what can we learn from you?" rather than merely being the traditional idiot abroad.

Jedd Jong



# Diver's Watch: TO DIVE

## or not to dive...that is the question!

What's available on the market when it comes to divers watches

By Dennis Yeo

Ok, a little disclaimer here...Dr Bernard Cheong we're not, and watches we don't own a lot! However, at F\*\*\* Mag, we're always here to share our knowledge on lifestyle product trends and, recently, diver's watches are all the craze around town, so do allow us to share our thoughts on them.

Let's first discuss a little about divers watches and what exactly constitutes a divers watch.

As the name goes, a diver's watch is a watch designed for underwater diving with a minimum of 100m of water resistance. Most entry-level diver's watches have a water resistance of around 200m to 300m, and our modern technology allows the creation of diving watches that can go much deeper, provided the diver themselves are able to go that DEEEP... A genuine diver's watch should get you to as deep as 1000m, and that's usually classified under their industrial standard of ISO 6425.

Okay, for newbies like us, ISO 6425 simply means that it conforms to the following characteristics:

- Uni-directional bezel at every five minutes elapsed minute markings
- A pre-select marker to mark a specific minute marking, and clear distinguish minute marks on watch face
- Able to visualise at minimum distance of 25cm in total darkness, including luminous tip
- Magnetic resistance, with accuracy of +/- 30 seconds in the presence of magnetic field
- Shock resistance, able to withstand a 3kg hammer knocking
- Chemical resistance, submerge in solution such as seawater for at least 24 hours
- Strap/band enforcement, after applying force of at least 2.2kg on the spring bar, and hoping it does not break or cause damage to the watch
- End Of Life indicator on battery powered watches. Yes, there are diver's watches that powered by batteries, from brands such as Casio & Suunto

Of course, besides the ISO 6425 classification, there's the build quality to be taken note of too, ranging from Casing (316L or 904L Stainless Steel material), Elapsed Time Controller (rotating bezel that allows for an easier reading of elapsed time of under one hour from a specific point), Bezel Markings (allows the diver to calculate how long they are submerged), Crystal (provides clarity), Water Resistant Crown (obviously!), Helium Release (usually found on more expensive diver's watches) and Strap/Bracelet (mostly pressure resistant and able to endure the corrosiveness of seawater).

Also, most of us would wear diver's watches, and not exactly for diving, but for the aesthetics, the look and feel, and of course, for some 'atas' ones, the prestige.

All of us know the meaning of water resistance, but how much do we know about resistance against diving and how deep water resistance do we need for diving? We've compiled a chart for your reference:

Water resistance	Suitability	Remarks
Water Resistant or 50m and below	Suitable for swimming, not snorkelling or water-related work, and fishing	NO good for diving, good for wearing when you shower or even washing hands
Water Resistant 100m	Suitable for surfing, swimming, snorkelling, sailing and water sports	NO good for diving
Water Resistant 200m	Suitable for professional marine activities and serious surface water sports	Suitable for skin diving only. NOT suitable for scuba diving
Diver's 100m	Minimum ISO standard (ISO 6425) for scuba diving at depths NOT suitable for saturation diving	Diver's 100m and 150m watches
Diver's 200m or 300m	Suitable for scuba diving at depths NOT suitable for saturation diving	Typical ratings for contemporary diver's watches
Diver's 300+m for mixed-gas diving	Suitable for saturation diving with helium enriched environment	Watches designed for mixed-gas diving will have the DIVER'S WATCH L M FOR MIXED-GAS marking

There are a lot of diver's watches out there, and so, apart from the usual suspects, we pick a few to be featured, and once again, here's a disclaimer that in no way are we associated with the brands listed here, and we try our best to portray the true light of these watches.



## Watches Below S\$10,000

### Claude Bernard Aquarider Sports Chrono

The unprecedented innovative Claude Bernard brings you their latest series of Aquarider collection of sports quartz chronograph, engineered for extreme water sports and for all sportsmen looking for a watch that will back them up when they are in action.

Water resistant to 220m, fitted with a screwed-in caseback, 44mm in diameter, the dial scintillates in cool aquamarine blue and is enhanced with chronograph sub-counters, with Swiss-made Edox 102 movement calibre. Aquarider is therefore a rare extreme sports watch that can offer a top-grade Swiss-made movement at an affordable price.



### Seiko Marinemaster SBDX 011

The first diving watch from Seiko dated back to 1965, and it all started with only 150m of water resistance, and today, we have 1000m of water resistance. The Marinemaster series is also known as the Emperor Tuna, and the unique difference between this and the other watch, is the one-piece titanium case made out of a single block, which makes it highly waterproof as well as non-permeable against helium, thus taking out the need for a helium valve. The brand's fans will find this a delightful watch for both diving and daily wear!

### Edox Iceman Chronoffshore-1

As early as the 1960s, Edox launched sports watches, some of which were water resistant to 500m and incorporated technical materials such as titanium, carbon and ceramics. With a name like Iceman, this is a watch engineered to withstand the most extreme of conditions, with a water resistance to 500m. The 45mm Edox Iceman Chronoffshore-1, with its polished black PVD-coated case, is a striking example of a modern diver's watch. The uniqueness of the signature oversized '1' numeral in yellow is the reference to the Class-1 Powerboat Championships, which is known as the F1 of the seas, for which Edox is the official timekeeper.



### Citizen Eco-Drive Promaster Professional Diver

One of the most affordable and entry-level diver's watches in the market, Citizen Eco-Drive Promaster Professional Diver is used for mixed gas diving with its 6mm non-reflective curved crystal, ratcheted elapsed-time bezel, screw-back case & screw-down crown, and reinforced urethane band and extender, with a carrying case for the wetsuit strap extension. Crafted in stainless steel with luminous accents, and 300m water resistant, it's a good investment for your kid's first watch!

### Luminox Navy Seal Color Nova Collection

Luminox is renowned around the world for its proprietary Luminox Light Technology (LLT) which enables its watches to glow continuously in the dark for up to 25 years. They are also the manufacturers of one of the world's most iconic tactical watches, the Luminox Navy SEAL watch, used and endorsed by the US Navy SEALs and elite military and law enforcement groups around the world for the past 25 years. Like all Luminox watches, Luminox Navy SEAL Colormark Nova watches feature the proprietary LLT which comprises micro gas lights (borosilicate glass capsules) encased in tubes that are constantly glowing, applied on the dial ring, hands, hour markers and at the 12h marker on the bezel. As a result, Luminox Navy SEAL Colormark Nova watches glow continuously in the dark for up to 25 years without the need for a light source or the use of any push buttons.





## Watches Below S\$10,000



### Omega Seamaster 300 Spectre

This is one of our personal favourites, not only because it's worn by the iconic suave spy and chick magnet 007, James Bond, but also because it belongs to the mid-to-higher-level range of diver's watches. The watch comes with the usual features: anti-magnetic; bi-directional rotating bezel; Chrono; liquid metal and water resistant to 300m. It doesn't come with the spy gadget you saw in the movie but still, it's James Bond's watch!



### Oris El Hierro Limited Edition

El Hierro is the smallest and farthest south and west of the Canary Islands (an autonomous community of Spain), in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa, with a population of just over 10,000. This limited collection was inspired by a submarine volcano off the coast of that island. This watch actually glows on you, especially on the bezel with the red indicator, and this is definitely a keeper if you're into collecting watches. Limited to only 2,000 pieces worldwide.

### Helfer Divermaster Sea Explorer

Boutique watchmaker Helfer Watches Geneva carry an impressive collection of multi-purpose watches, and might be the first to come up with a 12-year international warranty on their products. Featured here is their Divermaster Sea Explorer, which does have an unique colour combination to begin with, and each selection comes with two interchangeable straps. If you're into unique colours, this might be suitable for you.



### Tag Heuer Aquaracer

As their slogan goes, 'Don't Crack Under Pressure', and they're probably right. They're the first Swiss watchmaker in space, when American astronaut John Glenn, pilot of the Friendship 7 spacecraft on Mercury-Atlas 6, wore a TAG Heuer stopwatch on the first manned US orbital mission. Over the years, they have mastered the art of precision time keeping, especially at car races, but haven't neglected watersports such as diving. Aquaracer is at least 300m water resistant, has a ceramic bezel and, of course, comes in a fine-brushed and polished steel case.



### Tudor Heritage Black Bay

A sibling to giant Rolex, Tudor has fast amassed a cult-like following thanks to its rich heritage, strong vintage-inspired product direction and definitely its multi-million-dollar marketing. The Heritage Black Bay is part of the symbolic diver's line that was presented for the first time in its re-invented format in 2012, with its heritage going back to the 1950's. The Heritage Black Bay is distinguished by strong attention to detail and its keen reflection of past artistic codes. This highly versatile watch can be worn for all occasion as it comes with changeable bracelet / strap to suit your needs.



## Watches Above S\$10,000

### Panerai Luminor Submersible 1950 CARBOTECH™ 3, or PAM 00616

Aquatic experts and diving fanatics would be very familiar with the brand Panerai, as that's the main function of the original watch. Yes, the grandfather of diving watches has to be Panerai, and this PAM 00616 does not disappoint. Using material innovation and a combination of carbon fibres & ceramics, this special Panerai Luminor Submersible 1950 Carbotech 3 Days Automatic PAM616 watch is the only real dive watch from the Italian dive watch-inspired brand. With its unique look, you'll either embrace it or hate it.



### Rolex Oyster Perpetual Submariner Date aka The Hulk

This model needs no introduction, and we reckon it's still one of the most highly sought after watches on the market. Whatever the reason you're buying it for, its resale value is always there. This iconic model was launched in 1953 and besides the redesigned Oyster case, the essential spirit and functionality have been very consistent over the years. It's one of the best watches to own and, of course, if you're thinking of taking this to the pawn shop, the demand is still there!



### Audemars Piguet Royal Oak Offshore Diver

Here's another brand that needs no introduction. Thanks to its sporty look, it's no wonder their Royal Oak Offshore series is ever so popular, and has become an iconic status symbol among the younger generation. It comes in self-winding format, with dive-time measurement and date, a stainless steel case and glare-proof sapphire crystal and caseback. It also has a black dial with 'Mega Tapisserie' pattern, rotating inner bezel with diving scale and of course their black rubber strap.



### Blancpain X Fathoms

This is a rare model and we reckon not many will know that Blancpain produces diver's watches. In fact, their first diving watch dates back to 1953, when the iconic Fifty Fathoms was first produced. X Fathoms retains the essential characteristics of the original Fathoms, and combines them with a mechanical depth gauge to create the most high-performance mechanical diving watch ever produced. This complex mechanical diving watch features a decompression valve at 10 o'clock for saturation diving as well as other features not present in more conventional mechanical diving watches such as an amorphous metal membrane on the case near the winding crown and a maximum depth memory with secured reset pusher on the case band at 8 o'clock.



### IWC Aquatimer Deep Three

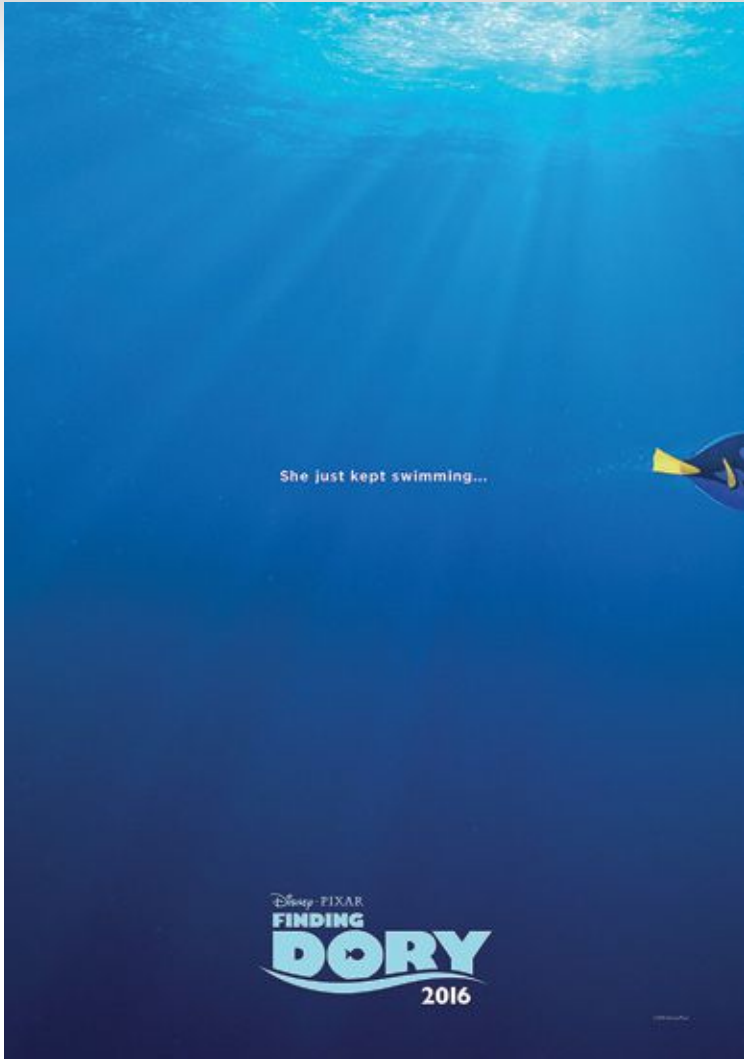
Though this is not new but, coming from the brand IWC has proven its weight in the watch industry. This is a cult favourite that contains mechanical depth gauges; it's one of those straight forward practical dive watches with no bullshit! Although it's only suitable for an up to 50 m dive, how many of us will actually exceed that depth? The Aquatimer Deep Three is water-resistant to 10 bar and offers a complete backup system for the dive computer.





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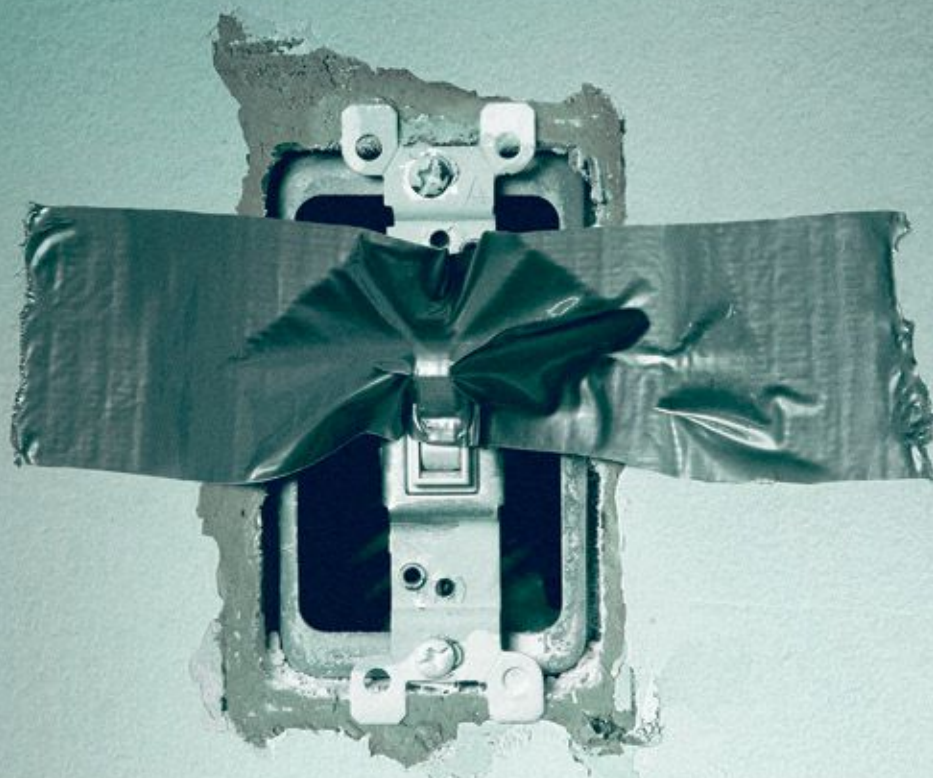
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